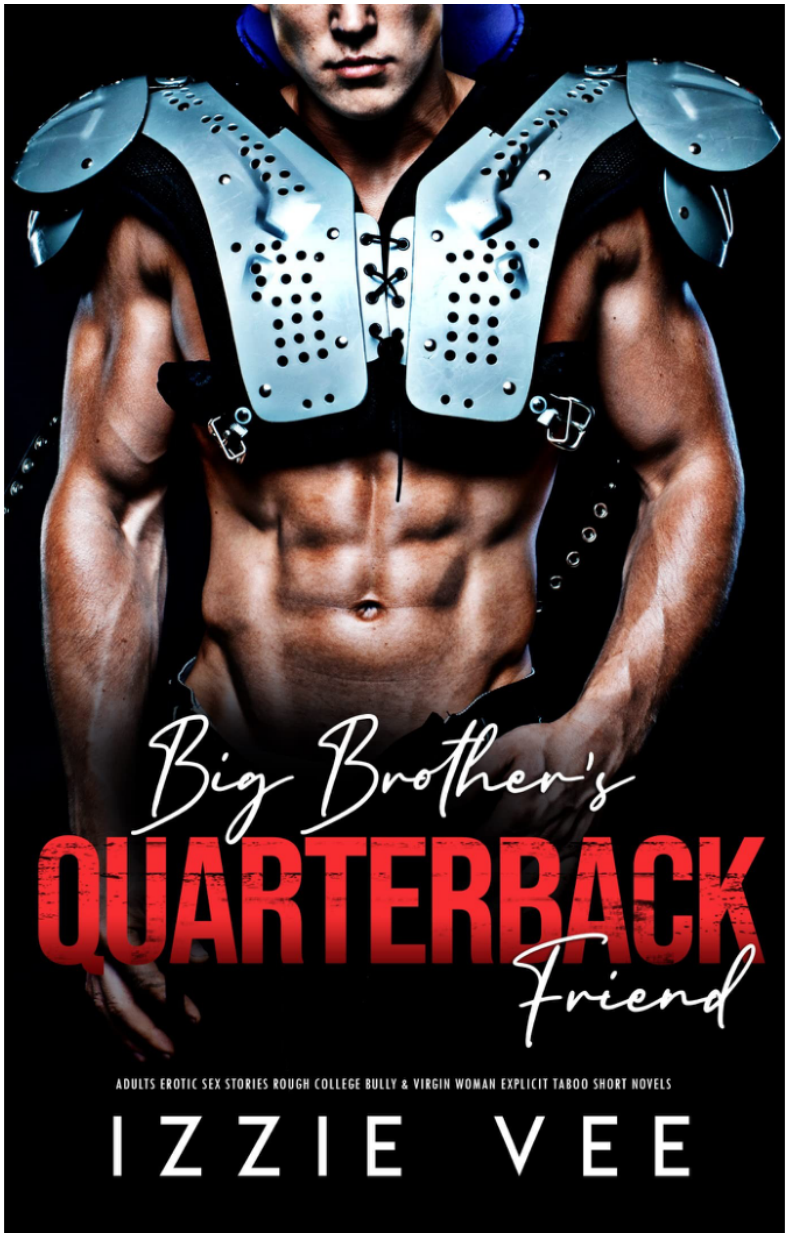

Big Brother's
QUARTERBACK
Friend
ADULTS EROTIC SEX STORIES ROUGH COLLEGE BULLY & VIRGIN WOMAN EXPLICIT TABOO SHORT NOVELS
IZZIE VEE

Big Brother's Quarterback Friend: Adults Erotic Sex Stories

Rough College Bully & Virgin Woman Explicit Taboo Short Novels

Steamy, Forced & Forbidden Romance

IZZIE VEE

Copyright © 2023 by Izzie Vee

All rights reserved.

This book is licensed for your personal enjoyment only, this book may not be resold.

No parts of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without written permission from the author, except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.

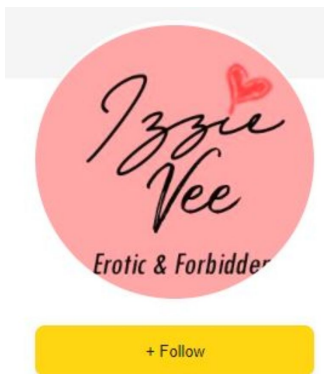
All characters in this book are fictious and figments of the author's imagination.

Cover Design by Izzie Vee

Cover Photo by vishstudio on Depositphotos.com

Important Readers' Note

Happy greetings!
Go follow me on Amazon with only 2 quick clicks. CLICK **THE FOLLOW BUTTON** below to be notified about my hot new releases weekly. Then it'll take you to my Amazon's author page, where *you'll need to click the follow button on amazon's site as well*. It's that simple! Two quick seconds and you're all done!



Thanks for joining and be ready to be notified about the hottest releases sent straight to your inbox. Cheers!

Table of Content

Big Brother's Quarterback Friend
Important Readers' Note
Chapter 1
Chapter 2
Chapter 3
Chapter 4
Chapter 5
Chapter 6
Chapter 7
Chapter 8
Chapter 9
Chapter 10
Chapter 11
Chapter 12
Chapter 13
Chapter 14
Chapter 15
Chapter 16
Chapter 17
Chapter 18
Chapter 19

Chapter 20
Epilogue

Chapter 1

Lindsay

"Is college all you imagined, Linds?" my friend Amy asked from across our dorm room.

"We've only been here a month, Ames; there's still a lot to figure out and wrap my head around," I replied, moving from the window I'd been staring through for the last five minutes. For the first time in my life, I was far away from Colorado Springs; two thousand miles, in fact. It still felt surreal.

Amy sat up in bed, placing the book to her chest. "True, I'm just happy we get to be roommates," she said, flashing me a wide grin.

"Me too." I flopped down on the soft pillows, breathing out a sigh as I briefly reflected on the first day we entered college just a month ago. Amy's uncle Byron was a member of the school board, and his connection made it easy for Amy and me to room together. Of course, I was over the moon about her being my roommate. I'd rather have

my best friend of over a decade than a complete stranger.

"I have a feeling college will be good to us," she continued.

I raised a curious brow. "What makes you think so? We aren't popular or anything like that."

I considered Amy quite average, not in her appearance, because she was a beautiful girl. Shoulder-length dark hair, a petite body with curves in all the right places, and eyes that changed from emerald to lime green, depending on her mood. As attractive as she was, Amy had never been a part of the popular crowd. I didn't understand why. She was the most fun-loving person I'd ever met.

As for me, it wouldn't take long to find the reason I didn't belong to that crowd. Not only did I consider myself socially awkward, but I didn't fit in with the perfect-looking cheerleader types, the former high-school jocks, the rich kids decked in outfits that cost an entire semester's tuition. My face was too round, my nose too big. I hated how thick my thighs were. My ass was another part of my

body I couldn't stand. The only thing I loved was my hair, its silky, golden-blonde tresses brushing my butt.

If it weren't for Amy befriending me ten years ago back in elementary school, I might not have any friends at all.

Amy shrugged. "Yeah, you're right; we're not popular right now. Not for much longer, though."

"What does that even mean?" I ask her.

"There's something I've gotta tell you that slipped my mind. You probably don't care anyway, so–"

"What is it?" I cut in, suddenly too curious.

"Austin's getting transferred from New Hampshire," she replied, wiggling her shoulders.

I cocked my brow at her, wondering why she was so excited by her brother switching from the school he'd already spent two years. "So?"

"So, he'll be spending his junior and senior years here in Maine."

“Where in Maine?” I pushed, sitting up in bed.

“Our school, silly,” she said so casually without the slightest idea of how her words suddenly affected me.

I froze in that spot, mobility completely gone from my limbs as I processed her words. My throat felt parched, and as I swallowed, it felt like a razor slipping down my throat.

“What?” I managed, my voice low, but somehow, Amy heard.

“Yeah, my dad thinks he can bring the Bruins to victory this season, plus our curriculum is way better than New Hampshire,” she said, sitting up, her legs folded under her. “Not that I care about any of that. I just want him around.”

“Bu– but… he’s coming here?” My heart rate had doubled for sure, and I could feel the heat warming my cheeks. I prayed Amy didn’t notice. The last thing I wanted her to see was how the news affected me.

“Yep, I can’t wait! Maybe with him here, we can be on the popular radar for once,” she scoffed.

I shook my head as if trying to clear it. “That’s actually the last thing I want. Ames, we’ll be just fine. We’ve been doing well without all that spotlight, anyway.”

“I know that, but it doesn’t hurt to have certain perks when my brother’s the star player on the team. I’m so looking forward to that.”

“When is he coming here?” I asked, with many more questions on my lips.

“He’s back in Colorado Springs, sorting some stuff with Dad. He should be here tomorrow or so.”

I cleared my throat, willing the panic inside to go away. “How long have you known he was coming?”

She shrugged. “From the end of summer, I think. Dad was a bit displeased with the negotiations, which is why Austin’s starting so late. I guess everything is worked out now.”

“Why didn’t you tell me earlier?”

“Because… I didn’t think you cared,” she said, her brows bunching together with a

frown. “Is something wrong?”

I shook my head. “No. It’s just that… I’m a little worried about being around Austin, that’s all.”

Amy looked amused. “Why, because he used to bully you when we were kids? Come on, Linds, that was a lifetime ago. You’re a little too old to carry that grudge.”

Sure, Austin had been a jerk to me when we were kids, and I’d expressed how much I couldn’t stand him, but that definitely wasn’t why I didn’t want him around. I couldn’t confess the truth. Instead, I nodded with a scoff. “I can still feel him pulling on my pigtails. Asshole.”

Amy laughed. “Remember that time he oiled the patio and called you out?”

“Oh, you mean when I slipped and almost busted my ass? Of course, I remember,” I said dryly. My butt had been sore for an entire week.

“Oh, my God, I can’t believe you fell for that trick, though. Did you really think Liam came to see you?” Amy said, guffawing.

Liam was a kid from our seventh-grade math class, a guy I really liked back then. Austin found out about my crush, then lied about Liam coming to see me. Of course, I got too excited to think straight because if I did, my commonsense would've spotted Austin's lie. "I shouldn't have since Liam never gave me the time of day. Austin's an even bigger asshole for playing with my feelings like that."

"He didn't mean any harm, Linds, you know that."

"What I do know is that I'm not completely over the crap he pulled on me."

"Don't worry; Austin has no time for pranks these days. He won't even notice you with all the girls that'll be fawning over him." Amy rolled her eyes. "Goddamn groupies."

My stomach tightened at her words, and I forced a smile. If I didn't get a grip of myself, I'd give too much away, which was the last thing I wanted. I had to control my reaction to keep my secret buried. My best friend could never know I'd fallen in love with her brother.

"Yeah, you're probably right. I probably won't even see him at all," I said.

“That’s what I’m saying,” she replied.

Still, there was a dip in my chest at the thought of not seeing him at all. I quickly dismissed the feeling with a deep sigh. “You must miss him – with him being away so long and all,” I said, watching her.

Amy twisted her small mouth and drew a few stray locks of her dark hair behind her ear. “I mean, he’s been in New Hampshire for two years, and even though we still saw each other on holidays, and we kept in touch through Facetime and text messaging, it wasn’t enough. He was always like a cushion between me and my parents; you know that. When he wasn’t around, it forced me to put up with being alone with them.”

Amy’s eyes glazed over, and I sensed she was having a terrible memory as she spoke. Her gaze grew distant, the cheeriness in her voice now gone, and I instantly regretted broaching the subject, especially when I remembered how hard it was for her.

Amy and Austin came from privilege. While my family lived comfortably, hers had a net worth that far outweighed every home on

our street. The size of their house was a clear sign; two floors, five bedrooms, a swimming pool big enough to fit the entire Olympic swim team, and luxury cars that filled both driveways. One would think they lived a happy life, but I'd been friends with Amy long enough to know how miserable she was. Nothing Amy and Austin did was ever good enough for their dad. He was a 'dictator', or so Amy called him, and their mother was a spineless bystander most of the time.

Amy snapped out of her reverie and managed a smile, being the best friend I knew and loved. "Anyway, it's not like I've been completely alone since he left. You've been here with me, which is better than anything I could have ever asked for."

A huge grin brightened her face as she moved across the room and dropped beside me on the bed. "We should go get something to eat. It's a Saturday, and I'm a little sick of being cooped up in this room."

"Where do you have in mind?" I asked, turning to her.

She shrugged. "We could grab pizza at

that new spot in the strip mall and a movie after. What do you think?"

"Okay, sounds good," I said. "I need to take a shower, though."

"I already did, so in the meantime, I'll pick something for us to wear."

I paused, eyeing her. "Nothing too sexy, K? You know how I feel about those booty shorts you wear."

"I wish you would let yourself go for once," she replied. "You have a gorgeous body. If only you would show it off."

"I'm good with leggings and a loose T-shirt," I told her. "Nothing with skin, please."

Without waiting for her reply, I grabbed my caddy and made my way to the bathroom I was still trying to get used to. As close as Amy and I were, it was still weird not having my own space.

I stepped into the stall and turned on the tap, our conversation coming back to the forefront of my thoughts. With the water pouring down my body, I processed what she told me. Never in a million years would I

imagine Austin coming to Maine. In fact, I never thought I'd see him any time soon. Though the news knocked me off my feet a little, there was an undeniable swell of excitement bubbling in my chest, one that refused to go away.

It had been two years since I'd last seen him. Two years of holding on to a memory, using it as a crutch when life got hard. Two years of wondering if I would ever experience that moment again. It was also two years of suppressing guilt whenever I remembered that night, those stolen minutes at the back of the school with our bodies pressed together and our lips doing a sweet, sensual dance. The best five minutes of my life. Even now, the flash of remorse made me glance at the door, hoping my best friend wasn't a secret mind reader.

Austin probably wouldn't even remember that night. Back then, he was fresh out of high school, still high on the popularity from his days on the football team. Now, he was a college star, attracting women from every level. I was just the girl he kissed during a school dance because her date had gone to be with an 'easier' girl. Austin had no idea

what that kiss meant to me and how comforting he'd been that night.

Yes, it would be silly of me to assume he still remembered that kiss – remembered me, especially when he'd changed so much. I wasn't afraid to admit I'd stalked his Instagram page, especially in the last year, and I was always awestruck with how gorgeous he'd become. His body was like a work of art; thick arms and thighs, muscled torso, a face the Greek Gods would envy, and a smile that would make a nun weak in the knees.

He had such a large following, fifty-two thousand to be exact. There was no doubt his DMs were always full, with many girls trying to get at him. He could easily have anyone he wanted. I really didn't stand a chance, even if I wanted it.

Which I didn't.

Being with Austin was definitely a no-no, not only because too many changes had happened since we'd last seen each other but because we were totally different people. As much as I spent countless nights fantasizing about being with him, he was completely off

limits. Completely. In fact, what happened between us was a secret I'd gladly take to my grave.

**

Half an hour later, Amy and I began our walk. Though we had our cars, we wanted the exercise. Besides, the pizza shack wasn't that far away. She wore a smile that made me curious. Amy was always a happy person, but the way she buzzed with contagious joy was a sign there was something going on.

"What's got you smiling so hard?" I asked, my question tainted with humor.

Amy shrugged and skipped a little as she grabbed my hand. "Nothing… nothing at all."

"Amy," I warned. "Come on. Fess up, or I'll tickle the shit out of you."

She giggled and pulled away, pressing her arms to her sides, hiding her sensitive spots. "Don't even think about it."

"Then tell me," I pushed.

“It’s nothing, honestly. I’m just really happy Austin’s coming here, and we’ll be hanging out on the same campus,” she replied.

I managed a smile, although the thought of Austin being near gave me no great comfort. “Austin was an awful neighbor, but he’s always been a good brother, hasn’t he?”

“The best. You know, some people are always crappy to their siblings, but not us. The truth is, I don’t know how I would have made it through my teenage years if it hadn’t been for you two.”

I smirked. “Well, we haven’t completely made it through,” I dragged. “We have a year left.”

Amy scoffed. “Whatever. I just can’t wait to be 21, so we can go to more than just house parties,” she rolled her eyes. “I’m telling you, Linds, as soon as we hit 21, we’re gonna to tear shit down. We’re flying out to a Caribbean island, and we’re gonna smoke weed and drink like there’s no tomorrow!” she exclaimed.

I chuckled. “Okay, hold your horses just a second. You do realize we’ll still be students,

right? Broke students."

She snorted. "Speak for yourself, but as soon as I hit 21, I'm tapping into that inheritance my grandparents left for us before they died."

"Sure your dad's gonna allow that?" I raised a brow. Mr. Callaghan had always been a shrewd, calculating man. I didn't expect he'd want his kids to be exposed to anything that would pull them from under his controlling thumb.

Amy shrugged nonchalantly. "It's not like he has a choice. The paperwork really matters, and if he plays hardball, then I get a lawyer."

"Do you think it'll get to that?"

"It can; Dad likes to be in charge, and when things aren't in his control, he gets pissy – but not this time. I want what's mine."

A small silence passed between us, and I pictured the tall, dark-haired man who I'd never seen smile in the years I'd known him. Mr. Callaghan always wore a permanent scowl, his eyes always cold, his body always stiff with tension. Kudos to Austin and Amy

for surviving living under his roof.

"Anyway," Amy continues, "Austin gets his money next year. We'll see if he puts up a fight then. I have a feeling he won't, though. Austin will do anything to please Dad."

"What's your mom gotta say about your dad's controlling ways?" I asked.

Amy rolled her eyes. "She's like an echo for my dad, so what'd you think?"

I made a face and rubbed her arm sympathetically. "Sorry, Ames."

"Nothing to be sorry about, bestie. Just be grateful you don't have parents like mine."

"Mine aren't perfect either, remember?"

"Anything is perfect compared to what I have, believe me," she replied with a scoff.

Another small silence fell between us, which was usually the case when the topic of Amy's family arose. There was always an awkwardness that filled the air as if giving us time to make it all sink in before we got back to our usual programming.

A couple approached us on the walkway, the guy with his arm around the

girl's shoulders. He kissed her temple as they walked past us, and I spotted the disgust that filled Amy's face as she twisted and watched them go. She turned back with a deep scowl. "Can you freaking believe that?" she exclaimed.

"What?" I asked, oblivious.

"I think I just threw up a little in my mouth," she murmured, dramatically gagging.

I laughed, looking back to the couple, the guy's hand now squeezing the girl's butt. "Why?"

"That's Alexia Francis, Regina Davis' best friend," she informed.

"Okay…" The names didn't ring a bell, but I suspected this was a backstory to whatever made her gag.

"And the guy is Sean Davis," she went on. "Do you see where I'm going with this?" She gave me an expectant stare.

I shrug. "Um… Regina and Sean are siblings?" I guessed.

She slapped my shoulder with a grin. "You got it!"

“Did I?” I asked uncertainly, still trying to understand her reaction.

“Okay, slowpoke, let me spell it out. Alexia is dating her best friend’s brother,” she said, shaking her head.

My brows furrowed. “What’s wrong with that?” I asked.

She stopped walking, staring at me as if I’d just committed a crime. “Do you even have to ask? Dating your best friend’s brother is the master of off limits. I swear, it’s the worst thing.”

“Is it?” I asked, puzzled. I could think of many things worse than that. Like global warming, animal cruelty, white collar crime… it was an endless list.

“Of course it is! I don’t know how some people do it. Like the awkwardness, the grossness! I mean, how do you even discuss men with your best friend when she’s sleeping with your brother?” she exclaimed, mimicking that gagging again.

Oh, boy. I rubbed my hands on my sides, guilt consuming me. Austin and I hadn’t taken things beyond that kiss, but I felt terrible

anyhow.

"I'm so happy you and Austin are complete opposites. I'm glad that will never happen between you two because seriously, you and I could never work out."

"You don't need to worry about that, believe me," I assured her.

Amy beamed at me, and my cheeks burned as I remembered prom night and that steamy kiss, Austin's hand slipping under my dress, my leg wrapped around him, his fingers running up my thighs, going up, up, touching —

Holy shit. I resisted the urge to fan my face, the heat spreading to every inch of my body.

Amy still didn't know about our encounter. In her head, I considered Austin my gross and annoying neighbor. Guilt still consumed me, although what happened was years ago. Knowing I did something that would rip Amy to shreds if she found out still haunted me to this day.

In my defense, I didn't know Amy would hate me and Austin being together. Her

outburst proved I'd been right not to say anything to her. It also proved I had to keep what happened a secret … forever.

That is, if I didn't want to lose my best friend.

Chapter 2

Austin

I pressed my fist against my cheek, my elbows on the armrest of the chair as I stared at the two persons in front of me. Suppressing a sigh, I shook my legs under the table while checking the time and resisting the urge to roll my eyes.

"Austin, are you listening?" the woman – my mother – asked as she glanced at my father with her perfectly sculpted brows, furrowed.

One glare from my dad, and I sighed out loud, easing up in my chair with my back firmly pressed against it.

"I'm listening, Mom, though I've heard this speech a million times before."

"And you're going to hear it again," my dad said sharply, the signature scowl on his face. "We expect nothing but the best from you, and if I ever hear that your focus has

shifted, you won't like the outcome."

"By that, he means girls," Mom clarifies. "It's time to get serious, Austin. The long line of women can wait. If you have plans on playing pro football, we expect nothing but unwavering dedication from you."

I opened my mouth to speak but clamped it back shut at once. There was no use arguing; it would only prolong the conversation, and all I wanted was to get the heck out of this room.

"Okay, I hear you, Mom; I hear both of you," I said with a tight smile, glancing from one to the other. "Now, I want to get settled in before it gets any later. Can we go?"

My mom glanced at Dad, who hesitated, and his eyes narrowed on me before he nodded. I perked up and pushed the chair back, which screeched against the board floors as I stood, pulling at my shirt.

Mom escaped—yes, escaped to the other room, leaving me with my dad, who slowly walked around my side of the table. I gritted my teeth, staring determinedly as he came up to me and slapped an arm around my

shoulder, gripping me as he led us to the porch.

"Your mom and I are heading back to Colorado Springs, and I'm leaving you in charge of the house," he said. "I don't want you having any parties with your little girlfriends or your pals," he said gruffly.

I glanced back at the beachfront property, one of the many properties my parents owned. It stood on a quarter-acre of land, with a view of the beautiful coastline. A huge patio stood out back, along with a perfectly manicured lawn and an Olympic-sized swimming pool.

"Do I make myself clear?" dad asked.

I tightened my jaw. "Yes, sir." The words came out forced, though I wanted to point out I was twenty years old, perfectly capable of hosting a party with no damage. There was no use in arguing. Better not to stretch this out and endure more of Hunter Callaghan.

"I expect the house to be spotless when we return. Don't think we won't have an eye on you after we've left," he warned.

“I have no doubt,” I murmured, sure that he had PIs on speed dial.

A second passed before he released me. “Let’s get you settled,” he said as he turned abruptly and headed back inside. I watched him go, muttering a curse under my breath.

**

My parent’s beach house stood about twenty minutes away from the campus, but I wished the distance was shorter. They didn’t make the best company, with my dad lecturing me all the way and Mom being silent, as usual. I kept my mind on reuniting with my sister Amy. Almost six months had passed since I’d last seen her in person, hugged her – experienced the feeling of home radiating through me.

Admittedly, Amy wasn’t the only person I was excited to see, though my sister would castrate me if she read my thoughts. I couldn’t stop them from surfacing no matter how many times I tried to keep them buried– no matter how much I thought the distance would make the feelings just … distant.

I'd known Lindsay Peart since we were kids. The short, round-faced girl with the trademark pigtails had been a staple in my life, a target for my practical jokes. I'd never seen her as my little sister, just Amy's quiet friend, and I was so glad that was never the case. It would've made things quite awkward for me when I began noticing how much she'd changed.

Gone were the braces, the acne, the baby fat. At sixteen, Lindsay was a goddess, with a body that made everyone else fade around her. She was the center of attention in a sea of people wanting my attention, and she didn't even have to try.

I didn't understand why she made me feel so… alive. She wasn't like the typical girls I dated. I preferred my women bold and outgoing; Lindsay was the opposite. Maybe it was her innocence that made me crave her like I did. I could do nothing to stop my ache for her.

It was stupid of me to fall for my sister's best friend. Yes, I said it. I was in love with her. Weird, when all we'd shared was a stolen

kiss at the back of the school auditorium. For some reason, she got under my skin. Two years had passed, and I still couldn't get her out of my head. If I overstepped, if I allowed my emotions to guide me, the outcome wouldn't be all sunshine and rainbows. It would be a thunderstorm with razors falling from the sky – aimed solely at me.

No matter how I craved Lindsay's soft lips again, her touch, her company… I couldn't have her. Not now. Maybe not ever.

The thought of never sharing another moment with her, of never having more caused a lump in my throat, which I quickly swallowed as I narrowed my gaze ahead. Luckily, we turned onto the campus just then. Small mercies. Ten minutes, and I'd be rid of my parents for a long time.

I sat up in my seat, staring through the heavily tinted window at the students walking around the campus, some scattered on the front lawns, their eyes locked on the luxury car as we rolled by. I bet no one had ever seen a Tesla Model S on campus before. I was already cringing at the thought of

disembarking. Don't get me wrong, I enjoyed not having to worry about money, but I hated the attention that wealth brought. All I wanted was an inconspicuous life.

The desire may be odd coming from a guy with fifty thousand followers on Instagram, but I wanted no part of that. Sure, I'd done well. With some of the best touchdown throws last season, I was in high demand, with colleges falling over themselves to have me. If only they knew I had no desire to play. Football was never my dream.

I heard a few gasps when I made my way out of the car and opened the trunk to get my suitcases. With a sigh, I ignored the phones trained on me. Another day, another attempt to put up with the spotlight created for me, a spotlight I didn't want.

Mom's face suddenly brightened as she looked behind me. I turned, the tension draining from my body and my lips parting into a smile when I saw Amy speeding down the pathway, squealing, wearing an excited grin.

I laughed as she launched into my arms,

almost knocking the air out of me. She wrapped her arms tightly around my neck, nearly cutting off my oxygen supply as she hugged me tightly.

"Gosh, I missed you," she exclaimed, and I smiled, swallowing her up with my arms.

"Not as much as I've missed you, I'm sure." I peeled her off me to take her in.

My chest tightened to see her so happy to see me – to be looking at her after so long. She suddenly launched back and punched me slightly in the gut, causing me to double over theatrically.

She grinned smugly, clearly thinking she'd done some damage. "That's for staying away for so long."

I quickly grabbed her in a headlock and rubbed my knuckles on top of her head while she struggled to break free. "This is for not calling me often enough," I said, laughing.

I released her to find her sporting a frown. "I call…" she struck my shoulder. "You're just always so busy."

I grinned. “Yeah, comes with the territory.” I pulled her in for another hug, glancing at my parents, who stood stiffly watching us. One would think they were strangers observing siblings teasing each other.

My attention shifted down the path Amy came from, and my heart instantly skipped a beat. Lindsay Peart. I couldn’t believe this was the same girl I’d kissed two years ago. Back then, she was cute; now she was beautiful – no, stunning. She still had that shy walk with her hands in front of her, her blonde hair like a curtain around her face and down her shoulders. Her intense blue eyes pulled me in, making her the only person who existed in that moment.

As she came closer, my heart rate sped up, and I struggled to breathe right. Her gaze held mine, and I swallowed hard as emotions swept over me. Joy, relief, tension, longing. They all took turns assaulting me.

Her cheeks slightly reddened, and she dipped her gaze, fiddling with her hands. My heart soared, happy to have gotten a reaction

from her at least.

"Hey, Austin," she said, her voice like a pacifier.

"Lindsay…hi." For some reason, my voice didn't sound like my own, so I cleared my throat and tried again. "Hi."

I was aware of my parents and Amy standing there, but I couldn't help myself. I reached out to her, feeling her hesitance as I wrapped my arms around her tiny frame. No one would think anything of us hugging. I'd known Lindsay since we were kids.

There was a soft hiss as if she inhaled my scent. I swore I heard a slight moan as she melted into me, accepting the hug as the seconds passed. I didn't want to let her go, I wanted to stay pressed against her for much longer than this, but then she eased off and awkwardly looked to the ground before clearing her throat and managing a meek smile.

I glanced at Amy, who remained oblivious to what had passed between Lindsay and I just now. She wore a contagious smile as she soaked up our reunion.

“You guys look great,” I said with a nod, glancing at Amy, too, so she wouldn’t catch on to me staring unabashedly at her best friend. “College life agrees with you, huh?”

“Thanks, you don’t look too bad yourself,” Amy complimented, striking me in the gut again.

“Amy, stop abusing your brother,” Mom scolds, a half-hearted attempt at parenting.

Amy and I ignored her. I nudged my sister’s side, then pointed to the suitcases at my feet. “Now, who’s gonna help me get this luggage to my room?”

Amy scoffed. “What do you have those huge muscles for?”

I flexed my arm, and Amy rolled her eyes. “These bad boys are for one thing only,” I said.

“Yeah, we know,” Amy drawled, looking bored. “The ladies already have their panties in a bunch, and you just got here—look.”

I glanced around me, earning a few excited screams and waves, the clicks from

photos being taken making me want to grind my teeth. A group of girls passed right by us, little giggles erupting when I forced a smile at them– their cheeks gone red.

I couldn't care less about them. There was only one person I wanted to notice me. She was already standing in front of me, looking everywhere but at me. Did I read the signs wrong? I'm sure I didn't.

I sighed, clutching the handle of my suitcase and throwing the duffel at Amy, who stumbled and gasped as she caught it. I laughed and quickly grabbed it from her before she fell, wheeling a suitcase toward her instead.

"Come on, the least you could do is follow me to my room," I said.

Amy rolled her eyes as we moved on, with her on one side of me and Lindsay on the other. I tried my best to concentrate on walking while listening to Amy's constant yapping, but it was a struggle with Lindsay being so close — her sweet perfume wafting past my nostrils, making me want to bury my face in her neck.

“Are you getting a single or a roommate?” Amy asked as we entered the lift.

“A roommate,” I replied.

“Oh, wow. I thought the star quarterback would get his own room,” she teased.

I smiled. “You know I don’t care for the star treatment, Ames. Besides, my roommate plays football too. I’m looking forward to making a new friend.”

I held the elevator doors for Mom and Dad, who lagged behind, but they waved us off, pointing to the next lift. Relief flooded me as the doors closed.

“So, Mom and Dad left you in charge of the beach house,” Amy said.

It wasn’t a question, but I nodded anyway. “Right you are.”

“Hmm. I can imagine those parties you’re already planning in your head, those girls who’ll be lining up outside your bedroom door.”

I caught the heavy blush on Lindsay’s cheek, and I scoffed at Amy. “Why do you

assume I'm some man whore?" I glanced at her to see the amusement on her face.

"Maybe because you are."

I laughed and shook my head. "Not even close. I only had two girlfriends after leaving high school. You know that."

"Yeah, but how many one-night stands?" she threw back, and I wanted to palm my face. I didn't want to have a conversation about my promiscuous life with Lindsay standing right there.

Lindsay cleared her throat, her entire face red now. "Hey, Ames, I just remembered about heading to the library for some research. I should get going."

Amy and I both paused. "Okay. Wait for me, though. We won't be long. We're just getting this ogre settled; then we can go together," she said.

"I–"

"I promise we won't be long. Pretty please; if you leave, I won't have anyone to walk back with me," she said, pouting, an action that usually melted my heart when we

were kids.

Lindsay pondered her decision while biting her lower lip. My attention latched onto her rosy mouth, and I ached for a taste.

Just one taste.

“Ok, fine,” Lindsay finally said. “I’ll wait for you.”

Amy grinned, and we continued our walk to my wing, a conversation in full effect again with Amy as the instigator.

“So, won’t you like, miss your friends back in New Hampshire?” she asked me.

I shrugged. “I guess, but it’s not like we won’t ever get to see each other again. It’s the age of technology, remember?” I winked.

“Well, I’m sure the ladies will be missing you.” She gave me a nudge in my side. “Remember that girl you found in your bed after that party?”

“Ugh. Don’t remind me.” It took an entire hour and the threat of calling the cops to get her out of the apartment I shared with a friend. Since then, I ensured to keep my bedroom locked whenever we had a party

going on.

I glanced at Lindsay, the discomfort on her face making me flinch. The last thing I wanted was the misconception that I was a player who only wanted one thing. Sure, I had my man-whore moments, but those days were all behind me.

We arrived at my wing, all eyes on us — well, me mostly, since I was a head taller than most people in the building and, of course, being a renowned football player and all. The cell phones were out, people whispering, the same old spotlight that I didn't want.

"Callaghan," a guy greeted as he stepped in front of me. "We heard the news you were being transferred here. Welcome, man."

"Thanks, dude." I shook his firm handshake and nodded to some other guys observing in a corner.

"So, think you can bring the championship to Maine? It's been twenty years since the last win," the guy continued.

"I'll do my best," was the only answer I had.

He patted my shoulder as I moved off. “Well, we’re counting on you, man.”

No pressure. I shot him a smile I hoped didn’t show how annoyed I was. Imagine carrying a burden you didn’t want. I hated the responsibility Dad placed on my shoulders, and for what? So he could live vicariously through me?

Pushing my irritation aside, I paused at my dorm door and turned to Lindsay and Amy. “Well, this is it.”

“Open the door,” Amy ordered. “I want to see if they gave you a gold-plated bedframe or something.”

A loud snicker left my mouth. If there was one thing I could count on Amy for, it was her ability to make me feel better without even trying. I reached for the door handle, but the door opened before I could turn the knob. A guy as tall as me stood on the other side, his unruly jet-black hair and green eyes giving him a mischievous look.

“You must be my roommate, Carter, right?” I said in greeting.

A tiny smirk lifted the corner of his

mouth. “That’s right, Callaghan. Pleasure to meet you,” he said, sticking out his hand.

We exchanged a firm handshake before his eyes drifted to Amy, then lingered on Lindsay. His gaze roamed the length of her. I could see it in his eyes that he found her attractive – I mean, who wouldn’t? Even so, I could feel my jaw tighten, my hands gripping the suitcase even tighter.

I cleared my throat when he looked at me expectantly. “This is my sister Amy and Amy’s best friend, Lindsay,” I said, my voice firm.

Carter looked between them and smiled, his attention staying on Lindsay. “Nice to meet you, ladies.” He reached out and took her hand, giving it a quick shake before kissing the back. Fury rose within me, and I swallowed to temper it. He shook Amy’s hand, and I waited for him to kiss the back of hers, but he didn’t.

Ok, dude. I see what you’re doing.

“Thanks for the company, guys,” I said, turning to the girls. “Once I get settled, dinner or lunch is on me.”

Amy grinned, being the foodie she was. “Dinner *and* lunch are on you, bro! See you later, punk.”

I chuckled, glancing at Lindsay who wore a smile on her face. Her eyes shifted to me, and our gazes held for a second before she nodded, whipping around to follow Amy.

I watched her go, noting how those jeans hugged her round ass and how her hair brushed the curve of her back as she walked, her hips swaying with each step.

Sweet mother of God, help me.

I vividly remembered the night we kissed, the night I found her crying behind the school after her date had left the dance with someone else. When I pulled her into my arms, my only thought was to comfort her. I didn’t expect the magnetism that made our eyes lock, breaths paused, heart rates going at the speed of light. Back then, my only thought was to taste her lips for a second, just to see if the emotions swirling inside me were real. When our lips touched, it confirmed what I’d suspected all along; this wasn’t just a crush on my sister’s best friend. Lindsay Peart was

made for me.

I'd masked my surprise when she pushed me away with a gasp, her eyes wild with shock. There was no doubt in my mind she wanted me. I felt the slickness between her pussy lips when I touched her there, heard her soft moan when I rubbed my hard cock against her. It was obviously bad timing. Lindsay wasn't ready for me back then. Two years had passed, and my desire for her hadn't waned one bit. In fact, it burned even brighter, fueled by our proximity to each other.

I let her go back then, convinced it wasn't the right time. Now, I had no intention of walking away again.

Buckle up, Lindsay because I'm coming for you.

Chapter 3

Lindsay

That night, I lay curled up in bed with one thing on my mind. Well, one person. Austin. Every cell in my body was now aware of Austin's return, of him being more gorgeous and chiseled than before. Sure, I had stalked his Instagram page multiple times, but seeing him in person was just so … surreal.

I'd missed that cocky smile, that thick, silky hair that made me want to run my fingers through it before stroking his hard jawline, looking into those deep brown eyes that turned my insides to mush on prom night. I noticed the way he stared at me earlier, the look of longing that made me confused and fuzzy. Maybe Austin had a thing for me a few years ago, but I figured with him moving on, those feelings would eventually fade. But the longing was still there; I saw it in the stare that made me feel exposed, like I was being

stripped of every article of clothing I wore.

I wanted to believe I still had that effect on him, but it was probably a side effect from the shock of seeing him again and my raging hormones. Who was I kidding? Austin was a charmer. A player. That was his way of flirting, something he did very subtly, yet very well. I was nothing special. Was I ever?

The thoughts left me uneasy. It was silly to think of a budding relationship between Austin and me, especially after what Amy revealed earlier. It would never be possible. Ever. I cherished my friendship with Amy more than anything and to ruin that would be an unforgivable sin.

Austin was a fantasy and that was all he would be. We were like fire and gas. Us coming together would be complete destruction.

I uncurled, laying on my back and staring at the ceiling. I'd been a good girl all my life. Gotten good grades, helped around the house, kept away from boys. Heck, at eighteen years old, I was still a virgin. Not saving myself for marriage or anything, just

waiting for someone who made me feel that spark. I'd been walking on the straight and narrow for a long time. Was it wrong to want to cross over to the bad side for a while?

Just once?

***

Amy's sleepy groan woke me the next morning. I kept the covers over my head, listening as she got out of bed and moved around our studio. My eyes still burned from not sleeping too well. Thoughts of Austin had kept me up for most of the night. I kept debating on whether he still wanted me, if I imagined that look he gave me. Then I scolded myself. It didn't matter. Austin was off limits. It was either him or my best friend.

I couldn't lose Amy. She was the only friend I had. Considering it took us years to form our bond, I couldn't throw that away for another steamy encounter with Austin.

Especially since he wasn't the settling down type.

"I was wondering when you'd be up," Amy said when I finally hauled the sheet off my head. She smiled, struggling to get a pair

of jeans over her hips.

"What time is it?" I asked groggily, rubbing at my eyes.

"Almost eight. I have a class in half an hour. You have a class at nine, which means you should be up and getting ready."

I eased up on the bed with a sigh. "Yes, Mother."

She cut me a stern look, then burst out laughing. "By the way, Austin will be on the field today for practice. I want to stop by in the evening to see him in action."

I swallowed, hoping my face didn't show my emotion. "Oh, that's cool."

"Of course, I want you to come with me," she said casually.

I shook my head. "Ames, you know I'm not really into football–"

"Neither am I, but this is Austin we're talking about. I'm sure he'd appreciate the support."

I pulled in a breath and scratched my head. Being around Austin wasn't safe right now. Not until I learned to control my reaction

to him. I didn't want Amy to notice how attracted to her brother I was.

"Come on, Linds, it's not like we have anything better to do after school. We don't have exams for a while, and we're always stuck in our room, anyway," she went on.

Not wanting to arouse her suspicion, I finally nodded. "I guess you're right."

She grinned. "Of course I am. Anyway, I'll meet you there at three thirty. Don't be late. I want Austin to know he has our full support.

I smiled. "I'll be there, don't worry." *Even if it means wearing the heck out of my emotional mask.*

Amy blew me a kiss, grabbed her knapsack and then moved toward the door. "Sweet, see you then, love ya," she called, slamming the door behind her.

I moaned and flopped back on the bed, just about ready for another round of sleep since I'd spent last night thinking about a man who could never be mine, depriving myself of much-needed rest.

Time would not allow me, though. With only an hour left for class, I dragged myself out of bed, yawning all the way to the bathroom. There, I took a quick shower, returned to my room and got dressed in leggings and a loose-fitted sweater.

Sitting through math class was torture, but at the end of it, I'd meet up with Amy, who'd texted me earlier about lunch at our favorite little cafeteria on campus.

I made my way there with a smile on my face, spotting her seated in the far corner, texting away on her phone with two trays in front of her containing our food. Eyes turned to me as I entered the room. I swallowed hard as I made my way through the noisy batches of college students, my cheeks flaming from the attention on me. I lowered my head, the walk to Amy eternal.

A sigh of relief escaped my lips when I slid onto a chair opposite Amy, who placed her phone on the table, giving me her full attention.

"Gosh, I was wondering when you'd get here, I'm starving," she said, unwrapping her

sandwich and immediately taking a bite.

"Math was a bitch," I grumbled, peeling the wrapping off my chicken salad.

Amy smiled. "When is it never?" she said with a packed mouth.

"Good point. Some days, I wonder why I even picked Econ."

"Because as much as you complain, this is what you love, and you'd like to run your own business someday. This is just a step up the ladder you have to climb," she said with a wink.

She had a point, but I still groaned. Not that I hated doing hard work, but my life contained nothing more. School, back to the dorm to study, sleep, school, assignments—the cycle continued. I wanted more out of life.

"You remember later, right?" Amy asked.

How could I forget the two-hour self-inflicted torture? Watching Austin's practice game would be nothing less than torment. "Of course, I remember." I gestured to my outfit. "See, I even dressed the part."

“Great. Maybe we can meet a few of Austin’s hot team members.” She winked while taking a sip of her juice.

“Yeah, I don’t think so,” I immediately blurted.

Amy grinned, mischief lighting up her eyes. “I saw the way Austin’s roomie looked at you yesterday. He might be into you.”

I scoffed as I shook my head. “Please, you’re either blind or clueless. He definitely wasn’t.”

She raised a brow. “You should give yourself more credit, Lindsay. You can have anybody you want right now.”

“I’m flattered that you think so highly of me, Ames, but I’m certain I’m not the majority of these guys’ type. Not that I’d want to be anyway,” I said with a slight scowl.

Amy paused amid unwrapping the other half of her sandwich, her eyes squinting as if trying to figure out something. “If you’re into girls, you can tell me. I’d definitely be fine with it.”

I snorted. “I’m not… it’s just that college

boys only want to party and have sex with random girls, and I'm not at all up for that."

"Nothing is wrong with random sex, y'know."

"Well I don't want a high body count at the end of college," I quipped.

She laughed. "Spoken like a true virgin!"

"Who's a true virgin?" a voice behind me asked, and my entire body heated when I recognized the voice. Austin made an appearance seconds after with a curious smile as he looked between us. I immediately wanted to sink through the floor.

"Not that it's any of your business, but my best friend and I were having a conversation about boys, and Lindsay here doesn't want the whole college experience. I, however, am up for it one hundred percent."

Austin's thick brows slightly lifted as he assessed my face, staring as if trying to read my mind. I wanted to run from his intense stare, but I couldn't move if I wanted to, so captivated I was by him. Instead, I shifted my gaze to the salad in front of me, using the fork

to play around in it.

"Well, Lindsay is being the smart one. You don't want to leave this place with regrets," Austin finally said.

"Who said anything about regrets?" Amy chipped in. "We only live once, baby!"

"And life can suck when you make stupid choices," he countered.

"Who died and made you the great philosopher?" Amy scoffed.

Austin stuck his tongue out at her. "We learn from experience, punk."

Amy rolled her eyes and took a sip of her drink before she pushed back her chair and got up. "Well, you can stay here and advise Lindsay. I need to pee."

My mouth flew open as Amy walked away, and I searched for an excuse to go with her, but none came fast enough. I was stuck in Austin's presence, subjected to having our first private conversation in two years. Austin sat there, staring at me unabashedly, pinning me even further in place.

He folded his lips and glanced in the

direction Amy had gone, then turned his gaze back to me. “It’s nice seeing you again, Lindsay.”

I cleared my throat, my cheeks warming. “It’s nice seeing you too.”

I scratched the back of my neck and looked around the busy cafeteria with everyone minding their business, yet with Austin here, it felt like all attention was on me.

“You look beautiful… as always.”

I bit my bottom lip. “Austin…”

“And I’ve missed you,” he added as his fingers crept toward mine on the table.

I quickly pulled my hand away before he touched it, my heart racing in my chest. “Don’t,” I whispered, looking around to see if anyone had noticed. “We can’t.”

Austin eased back in his chair, eyes still steadily fixed on me. “Why not?”

“I think we both know why,” I replied, my voice a little higher than before. I lowered it, leaning forward. “I made it clear that night, didn’t I?”

Back then, my decision not to move past second base only relied on the fear Austin wanted nothing more than sex. I knew his track record. For years, I'd seen the girls climbing up the fire escape to his room. Austin was a player; why would I assume there was something special between us?

"Of course you did," he said firmly, and I pressed my lips together and looked to the exit again.

"But like I told you back then, your assumptions weren't fair. I wanted more than your body, Lindsay."

His words sent tingles through me, and I squeezed my thighs together as an ache settled between them. "I'm not having this conversation, Austin."

He grabbed my hand as I tried to rise. Not wanting to draw attention to me, I quickly sat back down. "I know that kiss meant something to you like it did to me," he said. "I haven't forgotten."

"Is that why you haven't called me in two years?" I shot back, satisfied when he flinched. "Not even a text message, Austin.

Nothing."

"You asked for space, so I gave it to you," he defended.

He made a valid point, so I searched for another angle. "There can't be anything between us, anyway. Amy disapproves."

"And?"

I glared in disbelief. "Amy is my best friend, and I'll be damned if I let anything or anyone impede our friendship."

Austin stared at me for a beat, his expression hard to read. "I hear you loud and clear, Lindsay," he finally said, my name sounding like a caress on his lips. Lips that were so damn attractive. Lips I wanted to feel against mine.

Damn it. What's wrong with me? I literally just told him to beat it. Now, I'm fantasizing about kissing him. Pick a struggle, Lindsay.

I breathed a sigh and looked around again, relieved when I saw no one looking at us. Just then, I spotted Amy coming back, a smile on her face, one I quickly replicated as I eased back in my chair.

“I don’t want to talk about this ever again, Austin. Nothing can ever happen between us, got that?” I mumbled.

Austin didn’t reply, but his clenched jaw told me how he felt. When Amy arrived at the table, he stood and kissed her forehead. “I’ll see you later, sis.”

Amy frowned as Austin walked away without saying goodbye to me. “What was that about?”

I shrugged. “Beats me.”

Amy continued talking, but I hardly heard a word. My thoughts were too wrapped up in my conversation with Austin. I still reeled over his confession that he missed me. The honesty in his eyes confirmed I wasn’t the only one with such feelings. My heart soared, then fell flat when I thought of Amy and how devastated she would be.

As great as the words were to hear, the depressing truth remained. Austin and I would never be a thing, despite how much I craved it. There was no use longing for something I would never have.

Something that would make me happy.

Something that would make me feel alive.

My friendship with Amy was more important than being with the guy who'd stolen my heart two years ago.

Chapter 4

Austin

I'd only been here for a day, but I was already the center of attention. It wasn't all positive, though. I caught the malicious attitudes from the senior guys on the field. Not that it surprised me, nor did I blame them. The fanfare placed on my transfer must've left them feeling inadequate. I would be offended, too, if the entire coaching staff placed the team's future in the new guy's hands. There was nothing I could do about that except show them I wasn't the enemy. We were all playing for the same goal.

It also killed the team that girls were already throwing themselves at me like I was a treasure they'd just discovered. Now, there was nothing I could do about *that*.

While the girls on campus were mostly hot, none held a candle to Lindsay, who was simply the most beautiful human there was.

Just my bad luck; the woman I wanted the most was the one I couldn't have. She'd made it clear on her prom night, yet I bided my time, hoping the years would change her mind. So when Dad announced my transfer to Maine, my first thought was that I'd be near Lindsay again, and I hoped we could pick up where we left off.

I should have known not to hope. Lindsay was loyal and kindhearted, and even if it meant sacrificing her own happiness, she wouldn't do anything to jeopardize her friendship with Amy.

Truth was, I should take a page from her book. Amy was my sister, and staying away from Lindsay would keep our relationship intact. I'd hate for my sister and I to be at odds.

"Hey, Callaghan, quit daydreaming and let's get to practice." Coach Johnson's deep voice pulled me from my thoughts. I winced as he gave me a hearty slap on my shoulder. "No time for goofing around. The team is depending on you."

I sighed, reaching for a towel to wipe

my face before jogging behind the others onto the field.

"Two laps!" Coach Johnson shouted.

The warm sun welcomed me, and I squinted my eyes as my gaze traveled to the stands in search of Amy since she promised she'd be here. There was a high chance Lindsay would be there, too. My main reason for checking out the crowd.

I got knocked from my stance when someone bumped into me. With a frown, I turned to see who it was and met a deep smirk.

"Head in the game, Quarterback," Lance Adams, the linebacker quipped, flipping his middle finger at me.

I was just about to rush him when Carter, the team's wide receiver and my roommate came into view. "Don't pay him any mind, he just always wants to be the center of attention around here, and with a face like that, I guess that has never happened."

I smiled. "Well, if he keeps it up, he'll eventually know my right hook."

Carter grinned back. “I did my homework on you, Callaghan, and I believe you can really give us a win this year. You just gotta stay as sharp as you did back in New Hampshire.”

“Yeah, well, that’s the aim, right?”

He nodded. “Damn right.”

Later, we did a couple of drills and warmed up for actual practice. I looked to the stands again and caught sight of Amy, who waved at me, a huge smile on her face. I waved back and smiled, my eyes shifting to Lindsay, who sat right beside her. Carter saw me staring and came up to me, peering at the stands, too.

“Hey, I’ve been meaning to ask; what’s up with that Lindsay girl?”

My head snapped towards his so fast I swear I got whiplash. My brows furrowed. “What do you mean?”

“She’s cool, right? I wanna shoot my shot, but she seems a little standoffish,” he replied, not taking his eyes off her.

I clenched my teeth, willing my

expression to remain casual. “Yeah, er – she’s… last time I heard she’s taken.”

Carter made a face. “Crap, that sucks. She’s definitely my type: pretty and shy, but you know how those innocent-looking girls are in bed, am I right?” He chuckled, nudging my side, waiting for me to join on in.

The very thought of Carter touching Lindsay filled me with an anger I didn’t know I possessed. My jaw tightened as I gripped my helmet and moved off without a word, heading farther onto the field before I did something I’d regret. I glanced back to the stands and saw Lindsay and Amy in the same spot, talking and laughing.

The anger slowly faded as I stared at Lindsay, soothed by that big smile that could light up any dark room. If only she did it more often. If only she would smile for me.

“Callaghan!” Coach Johnson called, snatching me from my thoughts once more.

I looked to the sidelines to see him waving me over. I sighed, slowly jogging to confront him.

“What’s up, coach?”

“Eyes on the field and nowhere else, Callaghan,” he said, brushing his thumb over his nose and placing his other hand on my shoulder. “Hey, I get it. You’re a star player and a darn good-looking one at that. You’ve got a loaded family. Girls are gonna throw themselves at you, and being the young blood you are, you’re gonna want it all and more…”

“That’s not–” I began before he cut me off.

“Listen, your old man told me to keep an eye out, and that’s what I’m doing. Everyone is depending on you this season, and hey, I’ve seen your work, I know you can do it…” He paused, his clear blue eyes searching my face.

I wanted to roll my eyes, but I didn’t. I was so pissed at my Dad. He just had to get his hook into everyone, didn’t he?

“I know what I’m here to do, Coach. Trust me, I won’t let you or anyone else down,” I said, knowing that I’d keep my word but already so exhausted with everything.

Coach Johnson’s grip tightened on my shoulder as his thin lips stretched into a smile.

“That’s the spirit. Now you go out there and show them what you’re made of!”

I pulled in a breath as I anchored the helmet on my head and jogged back onto the field. The next hour seemed never-ending, and when I looked to the stands again, Lindsay and Amy were already leaving.

With a sigh, I walked to the locker once practice was done and took a quick shower before I grabbed my things and left before I bumped into Carter. The last thing I wanted to do was buddy up with someone who had his eyes on Lindsay – roommate or not.

**

After freshening up and packing my gear, I drove down to the beach house, totally not meant to host any girls as I promised Dad, but I wanted somewhere to clear my head. This was the only place I could think of, the only place that guaranteed total privacy.

I reversed into the driveway, then got out and grabbed my bag from the backseat. I

needed a shower again– never having been a fan of locker rooms and public showers, but the beautiful sunset gave me reason to make it wait.

Heading to the balcony, a perfect view of the ocean welcomed me, although the weather was a little frosty. It shaped up to be a chilly night. My favorite kind of night.

Smiling, I dug into the shopping bag and popped out my easel and my painting supplies. I didn't waste any time; I got everything set up and painted colorful lines across the canvas while my gaze traveled to and from the dying sunset.

The exhaustion I'd felt earlier faded like the sunshine in front of me. For a few minutes, nothing else mattered but getting a perfect painting.

Lindsay soon popped up in my mind, leaving me focusing on two things, struggling with figuring out which was the most beautiful.

I was obsessed with her, and although I couldn't admit it out loud, I had no problem confessing it to myself just now. I hadn't

stopped thinking about her for the entire two years we'd been apart. Being with other girls felt so wrong, which made me stop sleeping around. No one knew this, but I hadn't been with another girl in a year. Celibacy seemed stupid since the only thing Lindsay and I had ever shared was a kiss, but it made an impact – an everlasting one.

As long as we were only a few buildings apart, I'd never stop thinking of having her and fantasizing that someday I could.

**

Two hours later, I applied the finishing touches to my piece, gave it a lengthy stare, contentment rushing through me. Some people got massages, drank alcohol or took vacations when they were stressed. I painted. It was the only escape that balanced my equilibrium. It was also the only escape that no one knew about.

I started packing up my stuff, then searched the house for a spot to hide them since my parents could pop up. I hid them in a closet behind some boxes, pleased with my hideaway spot.

I'd do anything in my power not to let them control this one thing.

Chapter 5

Lindsay

“I’ve got a date!” Amy announced as she sailed into the room with a proud smile.

I bounded from the bed, my eyes wide as I stared at her. “What?”

“Told you, the perks of having Austin as my brother,” she said.

“Who’s the date?”

“His name is Jason. He’s a linebacker or something like that. I met him at football practice,” she replied.

“How come you didn’t tell me you were going?” I voiced in disbelief.

“Come on, Linds, I saw your face the last time. You didn’t seem interested in a single thing that happened on that field.”

Oh, I definitely was. Amy just couldn’t know. “I still didn’t mind being there for you … and Austin.” I could feel my cheeks

warming at the memory of Austin in those tights.

Amy made a face. “That’s sweet of you, but don’t worry about it. My dear ol’ brother has all the little groupies for support, and as for me, I’m okay sitting alone. Besides, I know you have an exam in the next two years to study for,” she said with a laugh.

I rolled my eyes. “When’s the date?”

“Tomorrow,” she said, falling backward on her bed and reaching for her phone.

“Wow, okay. Are you sure about this, Ames? I mean, you barely know the guy.”

“Well, that’s usually the point of dating, isn’t it, Linds? … where you get to know each other…” she dragged on slowly as if I were dense.

“You’re a freshman; these guys only want one thing,” I argued.

Amy groaned, annoyance filling her face. “OMG, Lindsay. Don’t be like my mom. I’m going on this date, and even if Jason wants sex, I’m sure it’ll be consensual. I’m not a virgin, y’know.”

“How can I forget?” I snapped defensively. I couldn’t help feeling that was an intentional jab at me. “You’ve made zero efforts in trying to keep it a secret.”

Her mouth fell open. “And why should I? This isn’t the Middle Ages where I’ll be shunned and scorned if word gets out,” she scoffed. “You should live a little!”

“Oh, if this is your idea of living, then count me out. I live fine knowing I’m not at risk of contracting something nasty from these man whores.”

Amy stared at me in disbelief. “Maybe some sex is exactly what you need to blow some steam off. It will probably loosen that stick up your ass!” she exclaimed before bouncing off the bed and leaving the room, sealing the door behind her with a hard slam that made me wince.

How the hell did we get from zero to one hundred so quickly?

Blowing out a sigh, I flopped back onto the bed, considering a thousand ways that conversation could’ve gone without ending in a fight, but I just couldn’t help the words that

left my lips. I was just looking out for Amy, and even though she thought she had it all figured out, it could come back to bite her in the ass. Football players were for the streets. Heartbreakers. I didn't want her to get hurt.

Thinking I needed some time away from the dorm room, I brushed my hair and pulled on a sweater before heading out, not having a destination in mind but walking alone was nice, regardless.

Austin had been here almost a week, and I'd only seen him about two days in the beginning. The last time was at practice, and I never saw him afterwards. It made me reflect on the last conversation we had and what I'd said. Maybe that was the reason he'd stayed away. Maybe he'd finally settled in and had too many distractions to even think about me. Though the thought made my stomach tighten, I couldn't really blame him, could I? I'd made it quite clear nothing could happen between us.

I stopped at a nearby café and ordered a slice of cheesecake and coffee before I sat and scrolled through my dormant Instagram

account, curious to see if Austin had posted anything since the last time. Just as I was about to click on his page, a shadow appeared in front of me.

I looked up, meeting Carter's smile. He looked even more attractive than when I last saw him, dressed in a snug pair of jeans and a sweater that hugged his bulky torso, a milkshake in his huge hand.

"Hey, Lindsay, right?" he said.

I cleared my throat. "Yeah, hi."

Carter glanced at the empty chair in front of me, and I prayed this wouldn't go in the direction I was thinking. "Mind if I take a seat?"

"Er… yeah, no." I managed a smile despite myself.

He slid gracefully into the seat, which surprised me considering how huge he was, that charming smile still plastered on his face. "I really like you, Lindsay."

I froze as my mind processed his confession. *He certainly doesn't beat around the bush, does he?*

“Are you going to say something?” he asked, making me realize I’d been staring at him with my mouth half-opened.

My forehead wrinkled as I frowned at him. “You don’t even know me,” I said.

He shrugged. “You’re beautiful; that’s all I need to know.”

I scoffed, shaking my head. “That’s pretty weak. And shallow. If you’re expecting me to swoon at your feet, I’m sorry.” I couldn’t help my laugh as I tucked my hair behind my ear.

He threw his head back and laughed at that, surprise in his green eyes as he looked at me. “You know, I underestimated you, Lindsay…”

“Really?” came my dry response.

“Yeah, I kinda thought you were the shy girl who barely said a word.”

I shifted in my chair. “And that’s your type?”

He shrugged and licked his lips. “Usually.”

“I’m sorry to disappoint you,” I cut in

sarcastically.

"You haven't. I'd still like to get to know you."

I sighed. "Carter I –"

"You have a boyfriend, right. I know," he said, disappointment in his tone.

"What? I don't, but–"

He raised a thick brow. "Really, Callaghan said you did, but I still thought I'd shoot my shot—"

"Wait, Austin said that?" I asked, crossing my arms on my chest.

"Yeah, he said you were taken."

My mind spiraled as I considered why Austin would say such a thing. We'd never had a conversation regarding that before, but I figured it was Austin's way of discouraging Carter from asking me out. Which I still found puzzling. He still wanted me, had basically said it, but I still couldn't fathom why. He was a freaking superstar, for crying out loud, while ninety-nine percent of the school didn't even know my name. We were complete opposites. Even without Amy being an obstacle, we

wouldn't have worked out, anyway.

"I'm sorry, Carter, I've got to go," I said, needing some time to clear my head. I just wished things were simpler, but they weren't. If I hadn't been so hung up on Austin, I'd probably give Carter a shot. Or not. He wasn't my type, although, according to him, I was his. I knew why, though. He was a typical footballer who wanted to break in the shy, innocent girl. Too bad he wouldn't get to first base with me.

I got up from the table, Carter's puzzled face the last thing I saw before I headed to the exit, regretting that I'd left the dorm for 'fresh air'.

Just as I bolted through the exit, I collided with a hard body, my face hitting the center of his torso. His scent washed over me as I pulled back, knowing who it was before I even peered into his face.

"Hey there, slow your horses," Austin said, an amused smile on his face as he stared down at me, his brown eyes darker than usual.

I could get lost in them, and for a second, our gazes remained locked together

while my skin sizzled from his touch. It seemed he'd just left the gym, dressed in a pair of jogger pants and a tank top, a pair of black sneakers covering his feet. His tousled hair hung in damp waves, a few strands brushing his eyes. God, he was so good-looking, making it hard to look away, but then I remembered the conversation with Carter.

Shrugging myself out of Austin's hold, I pushed past him to leave.

"Hey, did I do something wrong?" Austin called as he followed me, easily catching up.

"Leave me alone, Austin."

He moved in front of me, blocking my path and forcing me to stop. I swallowed hard and crossed my arms, flashing him a hard stare.

"What did I do?"

"What right do you have going around telling people I'm taken?" I snapped.

He seemed confused until realization dawned on his face, his jaw hardening. "You spoke to Carter."

“Yes.” I poked his chest, my fury rising. “Why did you do that?”

“Because Carter isn’t the guy for you. I wanted to save you the trouble,” he replied.

I balked at him in complete disbelief. “You had no right. What I do and who I date isn’t any of your business!” I exclaimed.

A bunch of kids walked by, staring at me oddly. I took a deep breath, now pissed at myself for losing control like this. “You had no right, Austin,” I repeated in a lower tone.

His Adam’s apple visibly bobbed as he swallowed. “You’re right. I overstepped, and I’m sorry, but I’m sure you understand how hard it was for me, hearing him talk about how much he wanted you – seeing the way he looked at you.”

My heart rate spiked, and I felt breathless even while standing still.

“Why are you doing this?” I asked, my voice barely above a whisper.

“You know why, Lindsay,” he murmured, inching closer.

I sucked in a breath. “Austin, we can’t

do this–”

“Yes, you’ve made that clear, but why is it that I still want to be with you despite the risk? I can’t stop thinking about you, Lindsay. Can’t stop wanting you.”

I gasped when his fingers laced through mine. I swallowed hard, the sudden tension in my body almost unbearable. “You left for two years and didn’t even try contacting me. We can’t just pick up where we left off.”

“You made it clear from the moment we kissed that it couldn’t happen again. I thought the distance would be just what you wanted, so I did as you asked. I left you alone, but coming back, seeing you again – I can’t stay away anymore,” he said.

My chest rose and fell, and with his hands holding mine, I wasn’t sure there was a way to calm my racing heart. “Amy,” I said. It was my safe word, the only word that kept me from falling into his arms.

“We can go tell her right now if you wish,” he was quick to say.

“I can’t do that. It would rip her to shreds,” I replied, my eyes pricking with tears.

I wanted him so much it hurt.

A soft gasp left my mouth when he pulled me around the corner of the coffee shop, pressing my back firmly against the wall, towering over me.

"What are you doing?" I hissed, pushing at his shoulder. If someone should pass by and see us…

"I can't stop thinking about you, Lindsay. Tell me you don't feel the same way." His hand found my cheek, and I held my breath, a shiver running through my body when his fingers grazed my skin, capturing a few stray strands of my hair and tucking them behind my ear.

My body was on fire, the flesh between my legs thrumming wildly. My panties were already wet, so aroused I was for him. Austin's scent didn't help, either; that combination of sweat and sandalwood making me want to lose myself.

I licked my lips and met his gaze again, seeing the lust that filled his eyes, over the moon that I still had such an effect on him.

"I do feel the same way, Austin, it's

just–" My words were cut short when his lips met mine. Shocked, I froze, allowing myself to get accustomed to the feel of his warm lips again. Then, like an ice cube in the sun, I melted into him, my lips moving over his as our tongues met.

Austin's hand found the small of my back as he pulled me closer to him and deepened the kiss. I could feel the eagerness and the passion– similar to what we'd shared years ago, but this time, it was much more intense. Almost greedy. A moan escaped my lips as I wrapped my arms around his neck, moving against him. My nipples tightened, my core pooling with more heat as we kissed.

I wanted him so much. I didn't want to let go, but commonsense popped up and reminded me where I was. It was dark out, but if someone passed by, they could clearly see who we were and what was happening.

With a moan, I pulled away, my cheeks blazing hot as I stared up at Austin, whose eyes were dark with desire, his lips still slightly parted.

I touched the spot where he kissed,

more heat assaulting my body. “I’m sorry Austin, but this can’t go on,” I choked, backing away.

“Lindsay, let’s talk about this.”

“There’s nothing to talk about. I meant it when I told you to leave me alone.”

“Really?” he cocked his head, giving me a quizzical stare. “Then why did you kiss me like that just now?”

I had no sensible reply, not when my body still craved more of that kiss, more of his fingers stroking my back, more of his hard cock pressed against my stomach. More of everything. I wanted to get lost in Austin so badly. “I have to go,” was all I could say.

“Lindsay,” he called, reaching for me. I eased back, taking off before I found myself trapped in his arms again.

To my surprise, he didn’t follow, and during my brisk walk back to the dorm, I debated on whether it made me relieved or sad. It wasn’t until I closed the door behind me that it occurred; I wasn’t relieved or sad. The only emotion that ran through me was utter devastation.

Chapter 6

Austin

I never thought I'd have it this bad for a girl, but there I was, losing my mind over my sister's best friend. When Lindsay ran off, I wanted to chase after her and make her see that whatever her fears were, we'd get through them together, but I didn't want to push her further away, so I gave her space.

Wanting to clear my head, I drove down to the beach house, going out to the front patio and getting comfortable on the modular wicker couch. I tried to enjoy the view of the full moon that cast a silver sheen on the ocean, but Lindsay was my only focus. The kiss we'd just shared was like gasoline on a fire. I wanted her even more now, which seemed impossible since my body had always yearned for her.

I reached down and massaged the erection in my pants, uttering a groan as pleasure surged through me. I needed release.

Another girl would never be enough. Since I couldn't have Lindsay—yet, I told myself—then self-pleasure was my only option. I pulled my zipper down and pulled out my cock, stroking it while filling my thoughts with Lindsay and the possibilities if that kiss had lasted a little longer — if we were somewhere private.

Every inch of her body was just as soft as her lips. I didn't need to explore Lindsay to know that. My cock grew more rigid as I imagined myself sinking deep into her body, her warm flesh hugging me tight.

My hands moved faster as I massaged my cock to the thought of her spread wide for me, taking every inch of me. The pleasure built with each passing second. I envisioned her sweet mouth opening up whenever I hit a sweet spot, her flesh pulsing around me as she neared her release.

My eyes fluttered, sharp tingles pricking my skin when I pictured Lindsay now on top of me, her back arched as she rode my length. I wanted to rub my thumbs over her hard nipples, and feel every inch of her flesh as I

moved inside her. I wanted my name on her lips as she begged for her release, and once she had it, I wanted her to shout my name to the sky as she hugged me tightly.

I stiffened on the seat, a grunt leaving my lips as cum spurted from my cock, flying to the floor. “Fuck,” I exclaimed, wishing Lindsay was here to collect every drop in her mouth. I cursed again, the image of her swallowing and licking her lips almost driving me up the wall.

That night, I went to sleep with a smile on my face, knowing my dreams would soon become a reality. I didn’t know how or when, but I wouldn’t stop until it did.

**

Before my classes began the following day, I tried to contact Lindsay. It didn’t occur to me that I didn’t have her cell phone number anymore. I couldn’t ask Amy since she’d find it weird, and I didn’t want to raise her suspicions. Instead, I found Amy’s Instagram page and scrolled through her followers,

happy when I found Lindsay's name at the very bottom.

I clicked on her page and noticed she hadn't posted updates to her feed but instead to her stories. There were mainly photos of her and Amy doing random stuff, that smile always on her face, her blue eyes twinkling with happiness. Some were of sunsets, with her silhouette in the foreground and some with her and Amy.

For as long as I remembered, it had always been Lindsay and Amy. I understood their friendship and somehow felt guilty for being a threat. Amy was my sister, and I had no intentions of hurting her, but fuck, the ache I had for Lindsay magnified with each day of not having her. I didn't have the self-control to ignore it. I didn't want to, either.

Acknowledging what a selfish prick I was, I followed her account, intending to text her later. Until then, I got dressed and headed to school where I endured sociology and calculus classes before I made it to the gym for a workout session. Tonight would be the first game with me on the team, and I didn't want

to mess it up.

In the middle of pumping weights with a teammate spotting me, Carter appeared, the trademark smirk on his face. With a jerk of his head, he told the other guy to get lost. I continued working, baring my teeth as I lifted twenty-five kilos.

“I see you’re getting pumped for tonight,” he observed.

“I imagine everyone is,” I replied between breaths.

Carter nodded. “Got that right, but I bet *you* can’t wait to dominate the field.”

He assisted me with putting down the weights, and I got up. “It’s whatever, I’m just gonna do my best.” I reached for a towel to wipe my face.

He scoffed. “You know, for a man who’s got all eyes on him, you don’t seem to dig the attention.” He searched my face as if looking for the reason there.

“Why? Because I’m not running around beating my chest with my fists? I asked.

“Not really. It’s just that I’ve never seen

you giving these girls the time of day," he said.

I frowned. "What are you saying, man?"

He shrugged and twisted his mouth. "Maybe you're hung up on someone."

"And maybe it's none of your business," I put in firmly. *Who the fuck does this guy think he is?*

Carter raised his hands in surrender. "Hey, I'm not tryna offend you or anything like that, but I've seen the vibe between you and Lindsay. I saw the way you looked up at her in the stands the other day."

My jaw tightened. "*What are you saying, Carter*?"

"That you've got a thing for your sister's best friend. I ran into her the other day, mentioned her boyfriend, and she seemed shocked. Looks like she isn't taken after all," he said.

"I've known Lindsay for years. I was only looking out for her," I defended.

"Okay, but wouldn't I be a good guy for her, Callaghan?" He raised a thick, challenging

brow.

"We might be roommates, but I don't know you enough," I admitted firmly.

"Fair enough, but now that I know she's single, I'll shoot my shot again and again until I have her. You don't have a problem with that, right?"

Carter smirked, and my anger raised tenfold. I got up from the bench and stood, just as he did. Carter was a big guy, but I had the height and weight advantage. At this moment, nothing would've given me greater satisfaction than to beat the shit out of him.

"I don't want any trouble. Stay away from Lindsay," I warned.

Carter choked out a laugh and stroked his jaw, straightening his shoulders and sneering at me. "You just made the chase so much more interesting. See you on the field, roomie," he said, walking away.

I watched as he left the room, my anger still coursing through me, my hands balled into fists. Next time, I wouldn't be so lenient with him. Another talk about Lindsay, and I'd guarantee him a visit to the dentist.

“Everything okay, Austin?” a fellow team member asked in passing, a towel thrown over his head.

I managed a stiff nod. “Just fine, Cameron.”

The slender guy nodded and was about to walk away when I called out to him. “What do you know about Carter?”

He turned back to look at me, then glanced in the direction Carter had gone. “Guy’s a snake who loves being on top. He acts nice at first, and then his fangs start to show.”

I nodded, realizing how right he was. Carter had been the perfect roommate for the first couple of days, and then he changed into someone else completely. He proved to be an asshole with each passing day, and after today, I had a feeling he would get worse.

“He gets pissier every year when Coach appoints someone else as Captain. It’s his dream to lead the team, and I imagine with you here; he sees you as another threat.”

I scoffed. “Mathews is a great captain, and I’m not the least bit interested in that

role.” If only they knew I wasn’t even interested in football anymore.

Cameron shrugged. “In other news, there’s a party at my place tonight if we win. I’ll text you the address.”

I nodded. “Sure thing.” We bumped fists; then he left me to my thoughts.

I never thought my biggest threat would be my roommate, but here I was, faced with being on defense. I didn’t mind Carter on the field; I just didn’t want him near Lindsay. She was mine. Only mine. If he didn’t want to back off, I’d make him regret the day he set eyes on her.

Chapter 7

Lindsay

From my seat in the cafeteria during lunch, I saw Amy approaching, her lips set in a grim line as she came toward me. Things were still a little tense from our last argument, but we were still on speaking terms.

She slid onto a chair and dropped her food on the table. “Can we please get back to normal? I miss being able to talk to you about every little thing, and that hasn’t been the case lately.”

I smiled. “Of course. I miss that too, Ames.”

Amy sighed heavily. “Good, ‘cause there’s a game tonight, and I want you there with me.”

“I know. I was wondering when you’d ask,” I smirked.

Amy’s brows raised at me. “Since when

you were interested in football?"

I grinned. "I mean, I'm not deaf or blind. Everyone's talking about the big game, plus the flyers are all over social media with Austin's face plastered on the front."

"True. So it starts at six—"

"I know that," I interrupted with another smirk.

She rolled her eyes at me, then continued. "And there's a party afterwards that you're totally coming to."

I opened my mouth, but before I spoke, Amy cut me off. "Before you say no, we'll be in good hands. Austin will be there, and so will Jason," she said, referring to her new boyfriend.

"No. I won't be a third wheel," I replied, shaking my head vigorously.

Amy clasped her hands in a prayer pose. "Come on, Linds, pleaaasseee!"

I mustered a sigh. As always, her puppy-dog stare did me in. "Ok, fine."

"I don't mean to sound like a broken record, but you need to come out of your

shell. We only live once, and we won't get this experience ever again," she advised.

"True, but I'm quite happy as is," I said.

"Nothing wrong with being happier." She winked, and I smiled.

"Speaking of which, Jason says Carter, Austin's roommate has a thing for you," she grinned.

I rolled my eyes. "He made that clear in the cringiest way possible."

Amy's mouth fell open. "Really? When?"

"After our fight, I went to the café on campus and bumped into him. Turns out he liked me without even knowing a single thing about me," I said, suppressing an eye-roll.

Amy laughed. "You know how shallow guys are, Linds, but Carter is a hottie. I say you give him a chance."

"Not a chance in hell. Carter isn't really my type."

Amy raised a brow and eased back in her chair, surprise etched on her face. "So you do have a type. Do tell."

I immediately regretted saying anything. I shrugged and cleared my throat. “I guess I like them taller.”

“Ooh. Well, he’s a little on the short side isn’t he?” she said as she placed her hand over her mouth and laughed. I joined in.

**

Amy and I chatted for a bit until she left for a class. I was on my way back to the dorm when my phone rang. Seeing my mom’s name on the screen triggered a swift intake of breath. I answered with a quick press of the answer button.

“Hey, Mom.”

“Hey, Sweetheart, how are you?” Mom’s weary voice greeted me.

“I’m good, Mom. Is everything okay?”

There was a small silence. “Yes, honey, how’s school?”

I sidestepped two cheerleaders barreling down the corridor. “It’s going great. I have Amy here, so it’s not all bad.”

“That’s great. How’s she?”

“She’s okay. You know Amy. Where’s Dad?” I asked, observing her quiet background.

“Beats me.” She sighed. “He’s probably doing what he does best; cheat.” She laughed casually as if it didn’t bother her, but it tugged at my heartstrings, bringing tears to my eyes.

For years, I thought my parents were the most perfect couple in the world. Dad was always home for dinner, we took family vacations together, holidays were always a great celebration. Until I stopped by his office after school one day. I was thirteen years old back then, but I still realized there was something wrong with Dad’s assistant pulling down her skirt and Dad doing his zipper when I entered his office. He took me out to a jewelry store that afternoon, and I was so excited about the mood bracelet I’d always wanted I thought little about his warning not to tell Mom what I’d seen. I didn’t need to tell her anything, though. I overheard her on a phone call a few months later, telling Amy’s mom about makeup she found on Dad’s clothes and the private investigator who discovered Dad’s many affairs.

Mom took to alcohol instead of kicking Dad out. The family traditions continued until they slowly faded. Now, we were three strangers living in a huge house.

"Mom, why don't you guys just get a divorce?" I asked, my voice cracking. "This isn't healthy."

She sighed. "I've gotten used to his cheating, honey. We don't love each other anymore, and we've both accepted that, but it's better to stay married than apart. There are certain perks I don't want to give up, and Derek knows that too."

I swallowed the lump in my throat and blinked back the tears, not understanding her actions one bit. I'd rather live alone than endure such a miserable life.

"Just keep focused, Lindsay. These college guys will cross your path, and you might even think you're in love, but it's not really love. Next thing you know, you're married to an asshole with a kid who doesn't deserve the misery."

"Mom, I'm just fine," I whispered, almost biting my tongue with the lie.

She sniffed on the other end. “I’m sorry – I’ve completely ruined your day, but sometimes, I have no one to talk to, and I’m just surrounded by all these…fake people.” She sighed heavily. “Sometimes, I’m tired of keeping up appearances, y’know.”

“I’m sorry, Mom. I wish I was home so we could talk and go out for dinner or something…”

“Oh, honey, I know, and it’s fine… I’m just a mess right now.” She inhaled deeply. “But listen to me, okay? Don’t make the same mistake I did. Don’t fall in love until you’ve lived a little. Men will distract you, and for some, you’ll always be inferior. The last thing I’d want for you is to live in someone’s shadows like I did.” She choked a sob, and the tears finally fell from my eyes. I quickly brushed them away, clearing my vision as I climbed the stairs.

“Okay, Mom,” I muttered shakily.

She cleared her throat. “Oh, sweetie, you must think I’m a mess.”

I shook my head, even though she couldn’t see me. “I think you’re the strongest

person I know, and I admire you for it," I croaked.

She choked on a sob on the other end. "I love you so much. I don't know what I'd do without you," she cried.

"I love you too, Mom." It took great effort not to cry with her. Someone needed to show strength in that moment.

"I'll talk to you later, honey. I don't want to keep you any longer, and I'm sorry for piling this on you."

It's okay, Mom, just… take care of yourself, okay?"

"Okay, sweetie."

I ended the call and pulled in a shaky breath, trying my hardest to collect myself. From the moment I saw her name on the screen, I knew it would break us down – her, mostly. Mom and Dad had been together for ages. They met in college where he was the popular kid, and she was the shy bookworm. He chased her hard, and she gave in. A year after graduation, they had me. We enjoyed a few decent years until things went downhill, then I watched as the love faded from their

eyes.

Only a fool would dismiss the similarities with me and Austin. It was a huge reg flag, a writing on the wall I couldn't ignore.

That evening, I struggled to find something to wear to the party, majorly because there was a high chance that I'd see Austin, and I wanted to look my best. I shouldn't be trying to impress him, but I couldn't help myself. Not after that kiss that had filled me with longing ever since.

I wanted him. There was no doubt how much I craved him. I hated the obstacles in our way. All that logic that I'd mustered was now gone with the wind. Austin was everything I shouldn't want in a guy, yet he was everything I craved.

Huffing a sigh, I dug through my closet and pulled out a pair of denim shorts and a crop top I'd bought on impulse—and with Amy's prodding— months ago. I bit my lips as I inspected each piece. Wearing this would turn heads for sure, but I didn't want the

attention. Only Austin's.

The doorknob suddenly rattled, and in the next second, Amy stepped inside. Her gaze immediately moved to the clothes in my hand, and I moaned mentally, bracing myself for her pushing.

Her face lit up as she moved toward me. "OMG, seems like that talk we had earlier worked. You're definitely wearing this!"

"Yeah, I don't think so," I said, throwing them to the side.

Amy picked up the shorts as soon as they left my hands. "You sure are! These shorts are sexy, perfect for the after party."

I sighed. "I swear, after tonight, I'll be sleeping for a whole week."

She laughed. "True, but I'm so very excited, you can't imagine."

"I wonder why?" I quipped.

"Well, for one, this is Austin's first game. Also, this will officially be our first college party."

"Ugh. Don't remind me."

"Don't be a Debbie Downer. I'm gonna

take a shower, and then we can leave after." She dropped the shorts on my bed. "Don't even think about picking out anything else."

"Yes, Mother."

Amy giggled in response, and I managed a smile, keeping my fingers crossed that tonight wouldn't be a complete disaster.

**

An hour later, Amy and I headed to the stadium in matching outfits, although I'd slung a jacket over mine, feeling self-conscious as soon as I pulled it on. Scores of fans had already arrived, their respective flags high as they chatted and cheered. I pulled my jacket closer, leaving only my legs exposed.

Once inside, I squinted, taking in the bright lights and the hum of noises that surrounded me. Most of the stands were full, and I anxiously searched for a spot for me and Amy.

"Come on, Austin reserved some seats for us," Amy said, pulling at my hand and

leading us down the steps toward the front.

The players were already in their respective areas, and I could see the Bruins gathered right in front of us.

Jason spotted Amy and waved as he ran up to the fence. “Hey babe,” he greeted Amy. I smiled when he waved to me.

“To the side,” he said, referring to our reserved spot. He pointed to confirm.

“Thanks, babe,” Amy said, blushing as Jason smiled and ran back to his team.

“Already calling each other babe, huh?” I teased as we made our way to the seats.

She giggled. “What can I say; we’re on the same page.”

We got settled in, my eyes searching the field for Austin, but he couldn’t be missed. He was the tallest, commanding everyone’s attention as they huddled around him, listening to what he had to say. My heart picked up pace for some strange reason I couldn’t quite comprehend. I narrowed it down to the ‘Austin effect.’

I wished things weren’t so complicated,

but I just couldn't see where it would work out for us.

Just then, he looked up to the crowd, his gaze searching the space before our eyes locked, and I held my breath. The tiniest smile lifted the corners of his lips, and he raised his hand, giving me a huge wave. Timidly, I managed a smile and waved back, watching the way his grin broadened.

A team member touched him, and his attention returned to the field. I still wore a smile when my gaze shifted and met with Carter's. His expression told me he'd witnessed the exchange between Austin and I – the blush on my face – but then a smile popped up on his face, and he waved at me as well.

With a bit of hesitance, I waved back, sinking further into my chair and glancing back at Austin, whose jaw visibly clenched as he glared at Carter.

Oh, boy.

I glanced at Amy to see if she'd noticed, but she was busy chatting with a group of girls sitting on her side. *Whew!*

"I swear, your brother is such a hottie.

What I wouldn't do to climb that stallion," the girl right beside her giggled. My brows furrowed as I leaned to inspect her, then swallowed the sudden lump in my throat.

She was stunning. Long, dark hair, clear brown eyes, and clothes that barely covered her private parts but showed her gorgeous body. Would Austin go for someone like her? I couldn't help but wonder. Someone so stunning, sexy and confident. She was exactly his type, right?

"I mean, he's single. Nothing wrong in shooting your shot," Amy replied. Her response felt like betrayal, although I knew it was all in my head. Amy had no idea I had a thing for her brother.

"I hear there's a party tonight. Maybe I can approach him there."

"You should, but get there early. I have feeling there will be a long line," Amy advised.

I never thought I'd experience jealousy, but the emotion that coursed through me was exactly that. It had to be. It was coupled with anger and sadness, and I wanted to sit and

pout for the rest of the game.

But as soon as the game started, I perked up in my seat, attentive as ever, my eyes never leaving Austin, who I knew was the most pressured on the team. I knew little about the sport, but I knew the basics.

As it boiled down to the end, the Bruins had a lead of five points, and a deep tension filled the entire stadium. Austin had the ball, and though he had a clear path to hand it over to Carter, he didn't. I glanced at Amy, who seemed just as confused as I was, then I turned my attention to the field again, where Austin was running at high speed, knocking guys out of his way and dodging some while others were at his tail, grabbing after him.

I held my breath and bit my lips on the edge of my seat as I watched with a bouncing heart. The stadium exploded into cheers when he ran over the opponent's end zone with the ball clutched in his hand.

I bolted from my chair and shouted, my hands stinging as I clapped. Amy hugged me, and we both jumped around with the rest of the stadium doing the same.

I thought the grin wouldn't leave my face, but as the game ended and the celebrations died down, I saw Carter punch Austin's shoulder, making him stumble.

I gasped, my hands over my mouth as I watched the scene that caught everyone's attention. Austin advanced on him, about to strike when a few team members intercepted. Austin shrugged them off, peeled off his helmet and flung it to the ground before storming off the field with his teammates behind him.

"What the fuck is Carter's problem?" Amy hissed. "He really doesn't want to get on Austin's bad side."

I sighed, hoping their fight had nothing to do with me.

Chapter 8

Austin

I gritted my teeth so hard, I thought they'd shatter in my mouth as fire coursed through my veins. My body ran hot, my heart racing in my chest. It wasn't adrenaline from winning; it was from wanting Carter's head on a stake.

I slammed my fist into the locker, causing a slight dent and wishing it was Carter's face instead. The coach and a few others on the team came in, and then Carter followed behind. I immediately lunged at him again, but two tight ends stopped me.

"What's the fucking problem, guys?" Coach Johnson demanded gruffly.

Carter scoffed. "Were you blind, Coach? That asshole could have cost us the game!" he exclaimed.

"If it weren't for me, you'd all have your tails between your asses right now. Try another fucking stunt like that again, and I'll make sure it's your last!" I growled, still

attempting to reach him despite being restrained.

"I thought we were a team, but this guy abandoned the playbook and decided to make it a one-man show," Carter spat, his hands curled into fists. I fucking wished he'd try.

"A win is a win," a wide receiver said. "We haven't had that in a while, Carter."

"Are we going to turn a blind to his bullshit because he gave us a win? No way in hell!" Carter exclaimed, banging his fist against the locker.

"Can you all calm the fuck down?" Coach Johnson thundered. "The only thing we should be doing is celebrating, not fighting. Carter is right, we're all one team, and we should play like it. Callaghan, a reporter is outside to see you; you should get going."

I tugged myself out of my teammates' grip and moved past Carter, hanging on to all the restraint I had.

"Tell Lindsay I'll see her at the party," he teased, and unable to help myself, I spun around, swinging my fist, which instantly connected with his jaw. He stumbled before

falling to the floor, his hand covering the gnash on his lip.

"Say her name in your filthy mouth again, and you'll regret it," I warned before I turned and left, ignoring the murmurs behind me.

My hatred towards Carter stemmed solely off him having his eyes on Lindsay. She was my woman, whether or not she realized it. I'd be damned if I let that slimy little snake get near her.

After talking to several reporters, I drove to the beach house and quickly showered and changed before heading to Cameron's party. Of course, Carter would be there, and I'm sure he'd try to make a move on Lindsay, especially since he realized I had a thing for her. Spiteful bastard.

I entered the mansion, pushing through the enthusiastic crowd. They parted like the Red Sea when they saw me. Whistles and squeals greeted me, and I stopped to take a few photos with the ladies before making my way through the rest of the crowd, searching for Lindsay.

Finally, I spotted her on the stairs nursing a drink as she hugged her shoulder with one hand. I paused to gape at her, unable to believe my own eyes. She wore a crop top that clung to her like a second skin, exposing her flat tummy and hinting at the flare of her hips that flowed gracefully into ripped denims that barely covered her ass. Her long slender legs were exposed, sinfully tempting, and the thought of trailing my hands along them caused a stirring in my groin.

She wore her hair down, golden as the sunshine, the lighting above her casting an angelic glow over her head that left me speechless. I was just about to head over when I noticed Amy sitting on the other end, and I realized they were having a conversation. I decided to hang back for a while, moving to a table in the center of the room to pour myself a drink.

“Congrats on the game, Austin,” a soft feminine voice said behind me.

I turned to find a pretty brunette with a seductive smile on her lips, her sultry brown eyes traveling the length of me.

“Thanks,” I replied, taking in her tight leather top that almost pushed her boobs out her chest.

“I’m Stella, by the way,” she said, pushing out her hand.

I hesitated before I took it in mine and offered a smile. “Nice to meet you.”

“The pleasure is all mine,” she mused, shimmying closer to me.

I cleared my throat, glancing up the stairs where Lindsay was. My gaze met hers, but she quickly turned her attention back to the conversation with Amy.

“So… I’ve been meaning to talk to you for a minute,” Stella continued, her long eyelashes fluttering. “You’re quite a busy one, aren’t you?”

“Comes with the territory, doesn’t it?” I replied, and she giggled.

“Must be nice, being such a superstar.” She ran her fingers up my arm, the action making me cringe. It spoke volumes of how much I’d changed, especially within the last year. The old Austin wouldn’t hesitate to take

her up on the subliminal offer she'd been giving me. I recognized the signs of an easy woman. One jerk of my head, and we'd be heading to a bedroom upstairs.

But that was the old me. New Austin only had eyes for one girl.

Stella pulled her phone and typed something in it. "I just followed you on Instagram. You don't mind if I text, do you?"

I looked back to the stairs and saw Amy leaving with Jason. Lindsay still stood there, hugging her shoulder while taking a sip of her drink. She caught my stare, cut her eyes at me, then descended the stairs and headed outside.

I turned to Stella. "Er, I'm sorry, I've got to go."

"But you didn't follow me back!" she exclaimed as I made a quick escape.

Once outside, I searched the grounds for Lindsay but couldn't see her anywhere with the crowd that surrounded me. I moved farther outside and saw her walking toward the gate, and relief overcame me. As I headed in her direction, a guy stopped in front of her, his gaze trailing along every inch of her.

Oh, hell to the fucking no.

Gritting my teeth, I approached with quick strides and reached for Lindsay's hand, pulling her away. The asshole glared at me, but he knew better than to try me. I uncurled my fist when he gave me a curt nod and went on his way.

"What the hell is your problem?" Lindsay snapped, tugging her hand loose.

"*What the hell* are you wearing?" I asked, taking in her outfit, trapped between the desire to cover her up with a sheet or rip that pair of sexy shorts off her.

"Excuse me? I wear whatever the hell I want to!" she exclaimed.

"You're only attracting assholes. Have you seen the way they've been looking at you?"

"Clearly," she snapped back as she raised a brow and crossed her arms. "You can have girls throwing themselves at you, but I can't talk to guys?"

"That girl back there was just congratulating me on the game," I defended.

“I bet she was. You usually give your number to everyone who congratulates you?”

I couldn’t help my smile. “Are you jealous, Lindsay?”

She rolled her eyes and moved off. “Don’t flatter yourself.”

I ran up behind her, grabbing her arm and forcing her to stop. “Let’s go somewhere private,” I suggested.

Lindsay’s brows furrowed. “Are you for real right now?”

“Yes, I am.”

She sighed. “Austin—”

“Yes, it’s a risk, but it’s one I’m willing to take. I need you, Lindsay.” I took her other arm, pulling her close to me. Lindsay took a deep, shuddering breath, but she didn’t ease away. “Tell me you don’t want me too.”

“God, Austin…”

“Just say the words, Lindsay, and I’ll walk away.”

She licked her lips, making me more eager to have her. “Just allow us this one chance.” I didn’t care how desperate it made

me. I'd gladly drop to my knees and beg if it meant being in Lindsay's life.

Another sigh from her and she threw her head back, exposing her beautiful throat. I suppressed the urge to run my tongue along that spot, kissing her jaw, her cheeks, my hands gripping her ass—

Lindsay gently squeezed my hand, cutting the filthy thoughts from going any further. I almost punched the air in triumph when she whispered, "Okay."

Chapter 9

Lindsay

When Amy and Jason left the party early, my only plan was to return to the dorm and go to bed. I couldn't stand being in the same room with Austin and the women throwing themselves at him.

Especially that bimbo, Stella.

From my spot on the stairs, I tried not to stare as they talked. Well, Stella mostly talked. I bit back my fury when she ran her fingers up his arm and moved closer to him. A flood of jealousy filled me when she pulled out her cell phone.

Taking a final sip from my cup, I dropped it in the trash can, then moved off, an ache in my stomach. I didn't expect Austin to chase me. His grip on my arm took me by surprise. I turned around, and he stood there, eyes filled with the same fury I'd felt earlier. He shot a glare at Troy, the guy who approached me earlier, asking for a date. Troy took the hint at

once, and from the corner of my eye, I watched as he moved to another girl.

Ugh. Guys.

Austin's comment on my outfit should have pissed me off; instead, it made me hot all the way to my toes, especially from how intensely he stared at me. I shouldn't have said yes to being alone with him, but who was I kidding? I didn't have it in me to say no to Austin. At least, not for long.

Whenever he came around, he triggered emotions I couldn't quite explain. Emotions that stripped my character, transforming me into a horny, confused mess. His touch always did me in; it was like something sparked when my skin met his, forming an entire force field around me.

He was my best friend's brother – completely off limits – but my body wanted him so badly, my mind and soul craved for him. I didn't have the self-control to resist him.

So, I took his hand, and we walked to his car. I was either too tipsy to care if anyone saw us or just too brave. Excitement coursed

through me as I slid onto the leather seat in his car when he opened the door for me. I didn't know our destination, but it didn't matter. All I cared about was being with him. The consequences could wait.

We silently drove for a few minutes. There was a slight sexual tension that followed us along the coastline and into a gated beach community. Awareness filled my head when he reverse parked in front of the first house on the avenue. I recognized the family beach house right away from the photos Amy showed me. It was even more beautiful in real life, and it wasn't even daylight.

Austin got out and quickly walked around to my side, opening the door with a huge smile on his face. I couldn't help my own as I placed my hand into his outstretched one and got out.

"Welcome to my humble abode," he said, smirking.

I glanced at the two-story contemporary dwelling, complete with four bedrooms, five bathrooms, a giant living room and a view to die for. At least, that's how I remembered it

from Amy's photos. "This is anything but humble," I replied, chuckling.

We headed inside, where the furniture was either pure white or made of glass. The only thing of color was the two-toned wood flooring and the oil paintings on the wall that created a bit of contrast.

"I didn't know you had access to this place," I said, looking around. Amy once told me her parents kept the keys to the beach house wherever they went.

"Yeah, surprisingly, my dad felt generous enough to leave me the keys, though he did make me promise not to host any parties here."

"Do you plan on staying here now that you and Carter aren't on good terms?" I asked, turning to look up at him.

His brows shot up. "How did you know about me and Carter?"

"That little fight after the football game. Remember?"

Austin groaned. "God. I can't believe you saw that."

“Everyone did. What was that all about?”

“He was pissed about something I did during the game,” Austin said casually, but from the tension in his shoulders, I suspected that wasn’t the entire truth. “Can I get you something to drink?”

It was a deliberate attempt to change the subject, but I shook my head. “I’m good. Can we head down to the beach?”

Surprise etched his features, and his face broke into a smile. “Oh, I like the sound of that. We can make a bonfire and get cozy,” he suggested.

“Yeah, I can definitely use cozy right now,” I replied. The thought of lying curled up next to him sounded like heaven to me.

Austin winked, and I just couldn’t help my smile. My heart bubbled with happiness when he leaned in to kiss my cheek. He headed to the storeroom to grab logs while I carried a basket with blankets and a few cushions. We stopped a few yards from the shore, where it was dark, the only light coming from the house. Austin hastily stacked

the logs, occasionally flashing me grins as he prepared the fire.

I clapped dramatically when he finally got the fire going and spread the huge blanket, which I sat on right away. Austin stood in front of me, a smile on his face as he reached down and grabbed the hem of his shirt before pulling it over his head. My mouth hung open, and my heart fluttered as I feasted my eyes on his toned chest, each ab carved to perfection with meaty, toned pecs.

"What are you doing?" I asked, though it was obvious.

"What does it look like, beautiful?" he said, hooking his hands into his waistband and pulling down his jeans. My heart hammered even faster, and I held my breath, watching unabashedly as he stripped down.

My cheeks burned when only his pair of boxers remained, the bulge in the front telling me he was just as excited about the impromptu strip tease as I was.

"I'm going for a swim, join me," he said.

I swallowed to soothe my parched throat. "You're crazy! That water must be

freezing cold."

Austin shrugged, raking his fingers through his sandy blonde hair. "One way to find out," he said and, without another word, went running into the darkness. A huge splash echoed in the distance as he dove in, and I stood, wanting to see it all. He came up after a few seconds, his pearly whites glistening in the distance.

"Come on!" he shouted.

I bit my lips and analyzed the risks with my fingers on the waistband of my shorts. At the very least, I could get hypothermia. At the most, I could probably drown if the currents were too heavy.

You live only once, said the voice in my head, one that sounded ridiculously like Amy.

Damning it all to hell, I quickly pulled off my shorts, conscious of my cotton panties, wishing I'd worn something sexier. But the lust in Austin's eyes canceled my insecurity. Something powerful ran through me as he stared, drinking in every inch of me. I didn't lose my top because I wasn't wearing a bra, but it was light enough for the ocean.

Austin laughed when I screamed as my body contacted the ice-cold water. “Oh, my God, it’s freezing!” I screeched.

“Just breathe,” Austin said, pulling me closer to him.

The breath hitched in my throat as he circled his hands around the small of my waist, my body pressed against his. It felt so good, so right being in his arms. I didn’t want to leave this place. I never wanted to let go.

Though the water was cold, Austin’s touch soon warmed me up. We bounced in the water, our bodies stuck together like glue, the mist from our breaths mixing. I licked my lips, and Austin’s eyes dropped there. I wanted him to kiss me, but it was obvious he wanted the green light. Ready to make the first move, I tipped sand between my toes and pressed my lips against his. They were a little cold upon contact, but they soon got warmer, especially when his tongue probed my mouth, his deep groan telling me how much he ached for this, too. The alcohol on his breath mixed with a minty flavor that made the kiss so delicious, and I didn’t want it to end, especially when he

deepened the strokes, gripping my ass, pressing me against his hard front.

I moaned, surprising myself by throwing my leg over his thigh. The action placed my pussy directly against his cock. Austin cursed as I dry-humped him, desire sending sparks running through me.

"I want you so fucking much, Lindsay," he said, voice husky with the same lust that burned me.

I swallowed hard hearing the words, already on cloud nine. "I want you, too," I confessed, pressing my lips against his once again for a mind-reeling kiss.

I gasped when Austin swept me off my feet and carried me out of the water. The wind pinched my skin, and I shivered, staring at his perfect face as he smiled down at me. He placed me on the blanket, and I reached for a towel to dry myself while Austin did the same. I grew nervous, but I didn't let it show. I wanted this. I needed him.

Austin joined me, taking my lips for another heated kiss that erased every nervousness and doubt. He propped me on his

lap, my legs straddled around him with my pussy sitting right at his crotch. The fire cracked, and my sighs penetrated the silence as Austin kissed me with his large hands trailing down my back.

The longer we kissed, the hotter we became. One would not believe there was seventy-degree weather because of how sweaty we'd gotten. Austin's boner was in full effect, my panties soaked with my arousal for him. He adjusted a little, wrapped his hand around my waist and pressed me further against him. I moaned, my entire body tingling as I rolled myself against him.

"Use your words, Lindsay," Austin whispered. "Tell me what you want."

Heat filled my cheeks. This wasn't the time or place for shyness, but I couldn't help myself. "Austin…"

He chuckled. "I'm going to need more than that, babe. Tell me." He jerked against me, his crotch brushing my clit. I dug my nails into his shoulder with a moan. "Come on. Tell me."

"I want your cock, Austin," I breathed,

wanting to hide my face in his shoulder.

He tipped my chin, forcing me to meet his eyes. “How deep do you want it?”

I searched his face, seeing the confidence there, yet something else stood out. Austin wanted me. He was just as desperate as I was, just as anxious. Knowing that, it gave me a boldness that made me say, “I want every single inch.”

Austin let out a strangled breath, then muttered, “Fuck,” before kissing me so hard I lost every coherent thought.

He flipped me onto my back, my chest rising and falling hard, my nipples poking through the clinging crop top. Austin’s Adam’s apple visibly bobbed as he stared down at me, propped on his knees with beads of water still trailing down his body. I didn’t need to ask what his thoughts were because his eyes told me everything. It still amazed me that a guy like Austin wanted me.

Wordlessly, he got up and removed his boxers, and I watched with bated breath as his cock sprang out, bobbing a few times before it settled, pointing at me. I licked my lips, my

heart racing so fast I feared I'd pass out. Never once did I consider his size, but it amazed me that he was so huge. Would he even fit?

He lowered himself to his knees again and hooked his fingers in the waistband of my panties before pulling them down my legs. Feeling a little self-conscious, I snapped my legs shut.

"Relax, Lindsay. There's nothing to be afraid of. You're simply the most beautiful thing I've ever seen. I'm going to make this good for you."

Believing his promise, I nodded and tried to relax. Austin slowly pried my legs apart and swallowed visibly as he stared between my thighs. My face burned from his scrutiny, and I thanked the stars I'd shaved a few days ago.

"Yeah, you really are fucking beautiful," he mumbled. "Every inch of you."

Austin positioned himself between my legs and trailed his hand along each slender column, then up my hips and toward my stomach. I released a shuddering breath when he ran his thumb over my clothed nipple. A

shiver ran through me as he continued to rub them both into circles.

"Austin…" I managed, almost breathlessly. Tension rose, leaving my body right, desperate for release.

"I want to make every inch of you feel good, Lindsay. Let me."

I nodded timidly and moaned as he continued, my pussy clenching when he pinched each nipple. He rolled the top over my breasts and tucked it, so it stayed in place. His eyes traveled from one mound to the other, incredulity in his eyes as he inspected each with equal fascination.

"You're perfect, baby," he said, his voice low as he took both into his hands and gently massaged each, pulling gently at my nipples.

I moaned and arched my back, succumbing to the pleasure, every inch of me so incredibly sensitive, his touch sending me closer to the edge. He dipped his head and latched his mouth to the right breast while his hand massaged the other. A gasp left my lips as his warm mouth covered the nipple, suckling hard, then slowly circling, moving

back and forth between each method.

My loud whimpers cut into the air when he bit my nipple, the pleasure-pain running up my spine. I writhed on the blanket, lost to the sensation, staring at the stars in the pitch-black night but not really focused on them. Nothing else mattered but the guy settled between my legs, his mouth doing things to my nipples I never imagined. My fingers raked through Austin's damp hair, gripping a handful when he suddenly slipped a finger into my warmth.

"Oh, God…" My hips jerked upwards, the pleasure increasing tenfold. It amazed me that a single finger could do so much. "Austin, that feels good."

"I can tell. You're so wet for me, baby," he growled, gently moving his finger back and forth. He didn't need to tell me how wet I was – I could hear it as his finger moved inside me.

"Oh, yes," I mewled when he added another that made me feel fuller than I'd ever been. With a few strokes, he easily left a wet trail of my arousal trail to my ass.

His pace grew faster, my pussy more

welcoming with each stroke. Austin eased up from my breast and met my gaze. My cheeks burned as he looked at me while his fingers worked inside of me.

"I'm ready for you, Austin," I murmured, unable to bear the tension any longer. "I want you inside me now."

Austin shook his head, still pumping me with his fingers. "Not yet, my love," he murmured back. "Almost."

My love. Those two words bowled me over for a moment, then I caught myself. *He's just aroused. There's no way he meant what I thought.*

The momentum built as he worked inside me, twisting his fingers, then gently stroking, going hard, then slowing down, all done with such precision that left my vision blurry and my body bucking as pleasure increased, spreading to every inch of me.

I grabbed Austin's arms, fucking his fingers. He kissed me hard on the lips as he moved within me. I squealed; my lips still stuck to his as my pussy tightened around his fingers. My body jolted and slammed against

the blanket, my orgasm crashing through me like a hurricane.

"Austin!" I cried, unable to hold back.

"Yes, that's it, baby. Call my name," Austin ordered.

I'd never seen him so wild, so primal. The hunger in his eyes made me want to run out of fear he would destroy me with just a single stroke from his cock. Yet, I wanted to bury myself in him. I wanted him to possess me. To put his stamp on me.

I moaned against his lips and clutched him tight as his fingers gently slowed before slipping from inside me. A second later, Austin lifted them to my gaze, his two digits so drenched, they were dripping.

"*Now* you're ready," he said.

He pulled me up and hauled my top over my head, both of us now completely naked. My back hit the ground as he laid me down again, spreading my legs, readying me to take his length. I gasped as he rubbed the head against my entrance. His fingers didn't compare to his cock—David and Goliath, in this case. My body shivered as it glided over

my clitoris. *Would it really fit?*

Austin suddenly stopped, throwing his head back with a loud groan, triggering a flare of panic inside me.

"Something wrong?" I asked.

"I forgot condoms," he replied, disappointment clear on his face.

I reached for the hand, giving him an assuring squeeze. "Don't worry; I want to feel all of you."

"Are you sure?" he asked.

I nodded. "Yes."

He huffed a slow breath, teasing my entrance with the tip of his cock. "I can't promise it won't hurt at first, Lindsay, but I'll make it up to you," he said softly.

Tears filled my eyes at how sweet he was. I nodded, spreading my legs wider before Austin pressed himself inside me. I gasped from a sharp pain that shot through me. He paused, kissing my forehead and trailing his hand along my thigh, allowing me to get accustomed to his size.

"I feel so honored for this gift, Lindsay. I

promise to make it worth your while," he said, kissing my mouth. I moaned as he moved inside me, filling me completely, my walls tight around him. Knowing he was inside me, that we had this connection at last, soothed every ache.

I wrapped my arms around his neck, meeting his lips as he gently resumed the pace, loosening my walls that clenched with each stroke.

Austin's breathing grew labored, and I could see him trying to restrain himself. I wanted to be brave enough to tell him to go faster, but I was still becoming accustomed to him inside of me. He eased up and pulled out, prying my legs further apart. His cock trailed down my pussy, scooping up every bit of wetness before he entered me again.

"Ohh, Austin… oh my God," I murmured, realizing he'd gone deeper but still not filling me. The pain faded, my pussy hugging him as he smoothly slid back and forth inside me. The squelching from his cock in my pussy made me blush, but it added to the appeal.

Soon, I relaxed, growing more confident with taking him, desire bubbling up inside me yet again. He moved faster now, making me spiral as his sweet cock hit my sensitive spots.

"I want all of you," I challenged breathlessly, and without another word, he sunk himself to the hilt.

I screamed, my nails digging into his muscular back, my walls convulsing as he hit a spot that sent sparks flying. Desperate to feel it again, my hands gripped his ass, and I pressed him deeper inside me, moaning when his cock rubbed that very sweet spot again.

My mouth fell open, and I looked to the stars again, but Austin took that as an opportunity to kiss me while he remained buried deep inside me.

"Ohh, this feels so good. You feel so good!" I exclaimed. He cupped my head with both hands and nibbled my lips, pulling back and filling me with a sharp thrust that knocked the wind out of me.

"You're perfect. So very perfect, Lindsay," Austin breathed, his hard, purposeful strokes making my head reel.

My nipples rubbed against his chest, sending more pleasure rupturing through me. Our bodies slid against each other like we were coated in butter, and my creamy pussy against his cock was the perfect cherry on top.

My legs grew numb, and I opened them wider, wanting every inch of Austin. “Faster,” I begged, my breath jagged.

He complied but maintained the same hard strokes that made my eyes water.

“Fuck, I love the way you feel around me,” Austin growled, digging deep, pushing me over the edge. My body quivered as another climax took over, my screams echoing on the empty beach.

Austin muttered a curse, his body stiffening. A few rough strokes, and he pulled out with a sexy grunt. My core squeezed at the emptiness, my body already missing his hard length. His eyes rolled back, his hips rocking as he emptied himself on my stomach. I sighed, feeling like I’d just won the lottery. This was simply the best day of my life.

Chapter 10

Austin

A flood of contentment filled me as I gazed down at Lindsay's sleeping body, a towel draped over her midsection, but the rest of her left completely naked. She was truly a work of art, and I smiled as a sudden thought came to me.

Lifting her in my arms, I carried her to the house, unable to take my eyes off her. She wore a peaceful countenance, and it pleased me that I was the reason she looked like that.

I'd had great sex before, but with Lindsay, our encounter stood out of this world. The connection between us made everything so much more intense, more pleasurable. I couldn't get enough.

After entering the bedroom, I placed her on the bed and rushed to the bathroom to get a warm washcloth. There, I wiped my essence from her, my hand running over every mouth-watering curve on her body.

It still amazed me how I had so much energy after fucking so hard and long, but I was fully awake, fully charged. Despite being so fulfilled minutes ago, I still ached for Lindsay, but she needed rest. This was her first time, and I wanted to go easy on her. I draped a blanket over her legs, leaving the rest of her exposed for my eyes only. The heat was on in the house, so she wouldn't be cold.

Pulling on a shirt, I made my way to the closet and retrieved my art supplies. I returned to find her shifting in bed, her eyes fluttering open. I stopped at the door, the supplies tucked behind me. I didn't want her to see them. Not right now.

I backed out of the room and placed them on a small table outside the door, then I rushed inside and climbed into bed with her.

"Austin," she muttered, her blue eyes sheltered by long, droopy lashes.

"I'm here; go back to sleep, baby," I whispered, kissing her lightly on the lips. She smiled as her eyes closed, sleep once again taking over.

When her breathing got steady, I

hurried to get everything set up and positioned myself to the side of the bed, taking a photo before tracing her outline.

I spent three hours perfecting every curve, every perfect feature that Lindsay possessed until I grew weary. Deciding to call it a night, I joined her back in the bed and snuggled up to her, sweeping her in my arms while acknowledging how surreal this was.

It was around five am the following morning when Lindsay's shuffling woke me up. My eyes opened to see her walking away from the bed, heading to the bathroom, her slender hips swaying.

I smiled and waited for her to return. She soon did, a soft blush covering her cheeks when she saw me staring.

"Come here," I said, and she came over and nestled her warm body against me with a contented sigh. "Did you sleep well?"

"The best sleep I've had in a long time," she replied, and I couldn't help my grin. *Another point for me*. "How did you sleep?"

"I stayed up half the night watching *you* sleep."

Lindsay groaned and covered her face. “What? That’s so embarrassing! I hope I didn’t drool.”

“You were perfect.”

She leaned in to kiss me softly. “I’m glad last night happened.”

“Me too.”

Her cheeks reddened again, and she covered them with her hand, biting her lower lip. “I want to do it again,” she said.

I grinned, covering her hand with mine and kissing her tenderly. “You don’t have to say that twice,” I replied, happy she was still naked. Easy access.

“I want to be on top,” she whispered, her eyes dipping. I raised my brow, another part of my body also raising at the request.

“I have no complaints, babe. Do your thing.”

I rolled over on my back, watching as Lindsay straddled me. She poised right above my throbbing dick, then slowly lowered herself onto it, moaning as her flesh captured every inch.

I clenched my teeth and reached for her firm breasts, squeezing them while Lindsay rode me. Her tight cunt massaged me, the nub of her clitoris occasionally running over my sensitive tip and making me moan.

Lindsay's eyes flew shut as she continued to pleasure us both, her pace getting faster as her juices lathered my cock. She leaned in to kiss me, a gasp escaping her lips just in time and allowing me to catch the sweetness of her breath.

"That's it, baby, fuck me," I grunted, my hips rising to match her strokes. I captured her lips again. She slowed on my cock while we sparred with our tongues, the arousal still raging rampantly inside me.

Lindsay flipped her shiny hair over her shoulders and raised her body to the tip of my cock, hovering, then slowly lowered herself on me again. Heat engulfed my entire body as my cock reunited with her magical pussy. Every second was sweet agony as her body consumed inch after inch, her pussy stretching even further to accept my girth.

Halfway, she paused and threw her

head back, bouncing, her eyes closed, her tightness expanding for me. I lay back, watching my cock drilling her, disappearing and reappearing, coated with her juices, her pussy lips fluttering back and forth. Lindsay was a fucking champion for taking my monstrous cock like this.

I trailed my hand along her chest, and she shuddered, moving an inch further. I sighed heavily and reached for her hips, slowly pulling her down to take all of me in.

Lindsay looked down between us, her mouth agape as her pussy swallowed my length all the way to the base. My hands moved to her ass cheeks, and I squeezed hard just as she leaned over to kiss me. She moved again, my cock still buried to the hilt as she rotated her hips, bouncing faster with each second.

"You feel so good inside me," she said, her voice low and sultry.

I couldn't find the words to respond. I was too overwhelmed by the pleasure barreling through me. Lindsay rode harder, faster, my entire length escaping inside her

over and over again. The smacks were loud in the room as she moved, her actions getting more chaotic – a mix of bouncing and rotating. Her release was on its way; I could feel how her pussy clenched each time my cock hit the back of her channel.

I gripped her hips and slightly raised her body while thrusting upward, filling her. The smacks grew even louder, and so did Lindsay's moans as her tight pussy clung to me. With one hard thrust, I buried myself completely and gripped onto Lindsay, holding her in place. Her scream came just as my growl echoed through the room.

As her walls hugged me, my cock swelled, releasing my cum deep inside her. She collapsed on top of me, our heavy breaths mixing as we tried to catch our breaths, basking in our release. After several minutes, my sodden cock slipped from her in a plop, followed by a dollop of my cum.

I kissed her clammy shoulders and held her tightly against me, never wanting to let her go. Ever.

Chapter 11

Lindsay

After recovering from that toe-curling encounter, I reached for my phone and checked to see if I'd gotten any messages. Luckily, there was none from Amy, but the time told me I had to get a move on.

"I should get going," I said, propping myself on my elbow and staring down at Austin's handsome face.

Austin reached for me, pulling me into his bulky arms. "I wish we could stay like this forever," he groaned.

I smiled. "Me too, but now it's back to reality," I reminded.

He gave a pout before easing himself up in the bed. "Speaking of reality, where do we go from here?" he asked, and my heart dipped.

If only I could ignore the complications and forget everything else but Austin. That was impossible, not worth imagining. Facing

the truth hurt, but better to handle it now before we got too deep.

"I want to be with you, Lindsay. I want to make this official," Austin said, and my heart dropped to the floor of my stomach.

"Austin… we can't. Last night was amazing, but we can't make anything official. This can only stay between us. I'm sorry."

He nodded slowly as if processing the information. "Okay, but will it be that way forever?"

I swallowed. "We don't have to think about that for now. We can just take things one step at a time until we figure out where to go from here," I said, forcing a smile. I wanted to be with him more than anything, but deep down, I knew this could never happen again.

"Lindsay, I already know where I want this to go," he said. "I want to be with you."

"Austin, don't make this more difficult than it is, please…"

He sighed heavily. "Okay, fine. Sure, this can be our little secret." He smiled, but this time it didn't reach his eyes.

I leaned in and kissed him, then pressed my forehead against his. “Just give me some time, okay?”

He nodded before capturing my lips again. “Okay, what do you say about tonight at six?”

I grinned. “I’ll text you.”

“You don’t have my number!” he exclaimed as I slid off the bed and grabbed my clothes.

“I have your Instagram,” I reminded him as I pulled on my shorts and my crop top. I pulled my hair in a messy bun on the top of my head before I went over to Austin and kissed him one last time.

“I could drive you back to campus,” he smirked.

I rolled my eyes. “You’re not funny.” The last thing I wanted was for Amy to see him dropping me off. “I already ordered an Uber.”

As if on cue, a sudden horn sounded in the driveway. Austin pouted, then pulled me in for a quick peck. “I miss you already.”

The sincerity in his eyes made me want to pinch myself. This was a dream, right? It had to be.

**

Reality hit me as the car sped away from the beach house. It was like being transported into another world, one that didn't feel as glorious. There was no happiness, no satisfaction, nothing but the startling fact that I had to face my best friend again, knowing I'd betrayed her. Bile rose at the back of my throat, but I quickly swallowed and pulled in a breath to collect myself.

Austin was an amazing guy, superb in bed. I didn't want to walk away from him, but Amy meant much more to me. I just couldn't fathom the thought of losing her. In fact, I couldn't lose either of them. Like I'd told Austin, last night would remain a secret between us until I figured out a way to find a balance. For now, I wanted to keep making careful moves.

I returned to an empty dorm. Seeing Amy's neatly made bed left me relieved. She'd

obviously spent the night with Jason, and I was happy about not having to explain where I was last night. Quite frankly, I didn't have the slightest clue how I'd respond.

I used the opportunity to take a quick shower, inspecting myself in the mirror for any love bites. I was happy when I found none but felt myself blush when it triggered memories of the previous night. Austin's skilled fingers on my body, his cock inside me, those sexy sounds that left his mouth…

It was just one taste, and I was already addicted. Staying away would be much harder than I thought. No, totally impossible. I needed to be with him again.

After leaving the bathroom stall, I quickly got dressed while planning the rest of my day. A sudden rattling at the door made me jump, and in the next second, it flew open, and Amy sailed inside.

"Hey, Babycakes!" she greeted me, throwing her coat over a chair.

"Hey yourself." My eyes narrowed at her, taking in her flushed cheeks and messy hair. "Someone had a good night, didn't

they?”

Amy stretched, a Cheshire-cat grin on her face. “The best. Jason wore me out last night!”

“Ok. TMI. Say no more,” I said, reaching for my hairbrush.

“Hey, where are you off to?” she asked, meeting my eyes in the mirror.

“The library. Thought I’d get some studying done.”

“Good for you.” She wrapped her arms around me from behind, giving me a gentle squeeze. “I’m sorry I ditched you last night. I was afraid you’d be mad.”

“It’s fine,” I said as I returned my gaze to the mirror. “I’m happy you had fun.”

“‘Fun’ is an understatement. Her face lit up with another grin. “Jason is a beast. I’m amazed that I’m walking right now.”

“TMI!” I called out, and she laughed.

“Linds, I swear, you don’t know what you’re missing.”

Oh, if only you knew, Ames, I thought.

"It's time to hop off that virgin train," she continued.

Already off, my friend.

Through the mirror, I watched as she stared at my bed with a sudden frown on her face. "You came home last night, right?"

I swallowed hard as guilt and nervousness took over. "Er, yeah… why would you ask me that?"

She gestured to my bed. "I've never seen you make your bed so soon after getting up. It looks just like it did before we left last night."

Oh, shit. Amy was always an observant one. "I don't know what you mean. I literally made the bed half an hour ago. Besides, if I didn't sleep here, where else would I have been? It's not like I have any other friends."

Amy nodded. "I see what you mean."

Guilt left a terrible taste in my mouth as I resumed brushing my hair. If Amy ever found out I lied to her, our friendship would never be the same.

Well, she won't find out, I told myself. *Austin and I made a vow, and we won't break it.*

I hope.

"So… Jason told me the weirdest thing last night," Amy began.

I placed the brush down and turned to face her. "Yeah?"

"Yeah, so apparently, the whole Austin-and-Carter feud got extended to the locker room the other day. Austin punched Carter when he made a comment about you," she said, her forehead wrinkling.

My heart bounced. "Me? What comment?"

"That he'd see you at the party or something like that," She shook her head as if trying to summon more information. "Anyway, Jason said Carter's an ass and that's why I think Austin got all protective …"

I swallowed the lump in my throat. "Yeah, er, I guess so–"

"It's kinda sweet isn't it? Knowing we have a big brother looking out for us," she said with a smile.

Oh, boy. I don't know how to tell you this, Ames, but I don't see Austin as a big brother. Not

even close.

"It is," I said out loud, moving toward my bed and grabbing my bag. "Listen, I should get going. Maybe we could catch up later?"

"Oh, um… Jason wants to take me out tonight, so I might not be here," she said, making an apologetic face.

Her response would have upset me if I hadn't been planning on seeing Austin later, but this was the perfect opportunity, though I felt like crap for being excited over it.

"Oh, okay. Have fun," I replied, my voice slightly squeaky.

Amy narrowed her eyes at me. "I kinda expected you'd be upset," she said. "Why aren't you?"

I pulled in a breath. "I don't want to rain on your parade or ruin any of your 'college experience'," I made air quotes, and she scoffed. "I still trust you'll make great choices, regardless."

She relaxed visibly. "Well, thank you, sweetie. I appreciate you."

"Right back at you, hon. Gotta run," I

said, kissing her cheeks, then grabbed my keys and left the room.

The door closed behind me, and I could breathe again, some of the guilt easing from my shoulders. I tried not to think about my sin and planned on doing the very thing I told Austin I'd do: take it one step at a time.

Which reminded me of what Amy said earlier about Austin and Carter. Austin didn't mention a fight that involved me, and while Amy only saw it as him being protective, others might not see it that way. All it required was one suspicious person, and our secret would exist no more.

My phone beeped with an incoming text message. Speak of the devil.

I miss you already, Austin's text read. *I hope we're on for later.*

I bit my lips as my fingers hovered over the keyboard. *Yeah, we are,* I texted back.

Can't wait, came his response. *I can already feel my lips on your soft skin.*

I groaned as I read his words, the visual already arousing me. Not knowing how to

respond, I tucked the phone in my bag and made my way to the library, where I spent the next two hours trying to focus on my assignment. A huge feat, considering my constant thoughts involved riding Austin, pleasure bubbling up inside me as his cock filled me.

By some miracle, I got my work done, then headed back to my dorm, getting ready to see Austin. My phone rang as I slipped on a cute maxi dress with thin straps. It was Mom. I sucked in a weary breath and cleared my throat before I answered.

"Hey, Mom," I greeted, trying to sound perky for her.

"Hey, sweetie, how are you?"

"I'm good, I guess. Just getting ready to head out."

"Listen, sweetheart, I was wondering if you could come home on the weekend. I really miss you. You're the only one who truly understands what's going on with me."

I raked my fingers through my hair, knowing how depressing the weekend would be if I said yes. "I don't know, Mom…. er, I

have several upcoming assignments and–"

"Please. I'm just so lonely here," she said softly, then choked on a sob.

I gave in with a face palm, bracing myself for an unpleasant weekend. "Ok, ok, Mom, I'll be there."

"Thank you, sweetie. I love you so much."

"I love you too, Mom."

The call ended a minute later, and I swallowed the lump in my throat, willing myself not to cry. I had no problem visiting Mom, I just knew it wouldn't go well. I didn't want to spend my weekend listening to her gripe about Dad coming home late or not answering his phone when she called. I didn't want to hear about the new woman he'd been seen with. Mom would rather live a miserable life than get a divorce, and I didn't understand it. What did she have to lose?

Sweeping the gloomy thoughts aside, I resumed getting ready. Knowing I'd see Austin in half an hour cheered me up a whole lot. I smiled to myself, slipping on a pair of strappy sandals before heading to the beach house,

ready for another fix.

Chapter 12

Austin

Ever since Lindsay left earlier, I'd been working on the painting I started the night before. A couple of long hours later, I was finally finished and had just barely managed to shower and get a few things in order before she arrived.

At approximately 6 pm, I heard a car pull up in the driveway and knew it had to be her. I checked my reflection in the mirror on my bedroom wall, tugging at the hem of my shirt. I mussed up my hair a little as a knock came at the door.

I went to open up, my heart doing a little flip when I saw her. I couldn't get over how beautiful she'd become with the most commanding set of blue eyes I'd ever seen. Her body seemed curvier and sexier each time I saw her.

"Hey, you," she said, a shy smile on her face.

It was then I realized how nervous I'd been, wondering if she'd come back. I didn't miss the tentativeness in her eyes that morning. She was on the fence, and I didn't blame her. "I'm glad you came," I said.

"Me too," was her simple reply.

Our gazes held for a second before I quickly moved to the side to allow her entry. She stepped inside, and I closed the door behind her before doing the one thing I'd been dreaming of since she left. I kissed her like a man starved, my tongue tangling with hers as she kissed me back with the same desperate response.

"I hope you're hungry," I said once I slightly withdrew from her.

"For what exactly?" She smiled, and my cock stirred.

"Actual food now, but definitely dessert later." My eyes dropped to her front.

She blushed, pushing at my shoulder. "You're something else, you know that?"

I chuckled, resting my hand on the small of her back as I directed her to the porch

out back where I'd set up a candlelit dinner. Lindsay's mouth fell open as she gazed over the display.

"This is… wow," she breathed.

"I remembered that you liked Chinese food, so I ordered your favorite and er – hot wings – everybody likes hot wings. And…" I lifted a bottle of sweet red. "Wine. This is my mom's favorite, so I figured maybe you'd like it, but I also got coke just in case you don't." I rattled on, suddenly so nervous about her response. All that mattered was getting it right. I wanted to please her in every way.

She giggled. "Austin, this is perfect." She leaned in and kissed me softly on the lips, filling me with relief.

I pulled out her chair, and she sat, then waited for me to fill our plates before saying another word. "It didn't occur to me before now, but don't you have practice today?"

"Coach gave us a day off since we won yesterday," I replied, taking up a forkful of food.

"Great. I don't want you missing practice on my behalf. Also, I don't remember

telling you congrats on winning the game. You did well."

I couldn't contain my proud grin. I hated playing, but knowing Lindsay was in the stands made it much more bearable. "Thanks."

"I have a feeling you'll have no problem getting drafted to the NFL," she said with pride in her eyes.

I scoffed. "I hope not."

Her head drew back as she frowned. "What do you mean?"

"I don't plan on playing football for the rest of my life, Lindsay," I confessed.

Her brows furrowed. "I thought you loved the game."

I shrugged. "To a degree. It's really my dad's dream to play professionally, not mine. I'm the biggest cliché there is." I choked out a laugh. "My dad missed the opportunity back in his day, and now he wants to live vicariously through me." I shook my head.

"Wow, I didn't know that. I'm sorry, Austin."

I reached for her hand and gave it a

gentle squeeze. “Nothing to be sorry about. I’m just trying to muster enough courage to tell him I don’t want to do this for much longer.”

“Just tell him. What’s the worst that could happen?”

I shook my head. “It’s not that simple. My dad’s an asshole and a monster rolled in one. There’s no limit to what he could do.”

She ran her thumb over my hand and sighed. “I’m sorry this is happening to you. No one wants to be stuck doing something they don’t love.”

“I wish my dad could understand that. He’s selfish and controlling and –”

“You’re an adult now,” she cut in. “You’re not the kid who started doing this to please your dad.”

I smiled and nodded, squeezing her hand a tad harder. “True, and you’re right; I’m not a kid anymore – definitely not the scared one.”

“Good, because you’ve got this, and I’ll be here for you no matter what.”

I smiled; my heart just about ready to burst in my chest with all the emotions swirling inside me. “You have no idea what those words mean to me.”

Lindsay smiled back, lifting my hand and kissing my knuckles. “I have a tiny guess.”

A comfortable silence settled between us as we resumed eating. Being with Lindsay felt so good, so natural. I couldn’t imagine being anywhere else.

“So, what are your plans for next weekend?” I asked, taking a sip of my wine.

Lindsay paused eating, her eyes still on her plate. “I’m taking a trip.”

“Missed your folks already?” I joked.

She shrugged. “Well, something like that. Hmm, maybe. It’s something kinda personal and I’d rather not to talk about it.”

“Sure, are you Okay though?” He watched my eyes carefully.

“Yeah, just need to take this trip. Can we talk about something else?” I asked, my voice a bit shaky.

“Of course. Of course Ah, uhm … You

must be grateful for your parents. I had always envied how perfect your family was."

"My parents are eons away from perfect," she scoffed.

"Wh– I thought–"

"They do a good job at keeping up appearances, but they hate each other. My mom's always sad and miserable, and I haven't even heard from my dad since I got here." She shook her head. "He's barely around. Everything's just a whole mess."

"Damn. I didn't know that."

She cleared her throat. "No one knows, really. I haven't even told Amy. Like you, she thinks they're perfect, and I just can't find it in me to tell her they're worse than yours."

I watched as a series of emotions played across her face before she continued. "My dad has been cheating on Mom since I was thirteen years old."

"Holy shit." I stared at her, shocked to my core. The Pearts were the epitome of a perfect family back in Colorado Springs. At least, back in the day. What happened? If

Lindsay hadn't told me, I wouldn't have believed it.

"Yup," Lindsay replied, bitterness lining her voice. "Because of how he treats her, Mom constantly reminds me never to rush falling in love. She warns me about being sure before giving my heart to anyone."

I shifted in my chair, not sure about her direction, but not liking how nervous it made me feel. "Her story isn't yours, Lindsay."

She sighed lightly. "I know that, I just…" she shrugged her shoulders and forced a smile. "Can we talk about something else?"

I nodded at once. "Sure. As a matter of fact, I've got something for you."

"A surprise?" she asked, her face lighting up.

"Something like that." I got up from the table and moved to the living room, retrieving the painting of her and taking a deep breath, hoping she'd like it.

I returned to find her sipping a glass of wine, grinning coyly. "This is good," she said, twirling the glass.

“I’m glad you like it, and I hope you like *this*,” I said, handing the canvas to her. Her brows dipped as she took it, and there was a small smile on her face as she gently ripped the wrapping.

My heart raced a mile a second as I awaited her reaction. As the painting became visible, she gasped, her eyes roving over the perimeter before she looked up at me, eyes glistening.

“Austin, what – how—when?” She looked back to the medium, her eyes searching, her lips slightly agape. My heart soared. “Did you do this?”

I nodded. “Yeah, last night when you were asleep. I finished this morning.”

Her hand flew to her mouth, a single tear drop falling from her eyes. “It’s beautiful,” she said, managing a shaky laugh.

It was like being twelve again, giving my first crush her Valentine’s Day gift. “You inspired it, after all.”

Lindsay smiled and stood, reaching out her hands for a hug. “I can’t believe you did this. This is actual talent,” she said as she

hugged me.

"I appreciate that, Lindsay."

"Is this what you're studying?" she asked as she withdrew to study the painting again.

I laughed. "Nah, this is just a hobby."

"What? You can make actual money from this. *A lot*, Austin. You're really good!"

I traced my hand along the curve of her jaw. "You're the only person who knows now."

Her eyes widened. "Not even Amy?"

I shook my head.

She swallowed. "Is this something you love?"

"Definitely. It usually clears my head."

"I'm so honored; thank you."

I kissed her tenderly, tasting the wine she had just drank, sweet and sultry, as her soft lips moved against mine. My need for her grew more intense, and within seconds I was sporting a boner only meant for her.

When I pressed it against her stomach,

she moaned into my mouth and rested the painting on the chair before wrapping her arms around me, clinging tightly.

We stumbled inside, and I kicked the door shut while tugging at her dress. Lindsay's hands were at my crotch, massaging my hardness while the kiss deepened, the temperature in the room rising to a scorching degree.

Thinking I couldn't make it to the bedroom, I spun her around in the living room, my hands groping her tits while I sucked on her neck. She threw her head back, allowing me easier access while her warm hands directed my every caress.

"Austin, please… don't keep me waiting," she moaned, her panting loud as she writhed her body against me.

My hands moved quickly as I positioned her on a small table close to the wall and peeled off her dress. To my surprise, Lindsay wasn't wearing a bra, only lacy panties that hugged her round ass. I ran my hands down her body, feeling her tits that were firm yet soft in my palms, fuller than my hands could

hold.

My cock twitched, eager to have her again – every inch of my body basking in her perfection.

Lindsay peeled off her panties before doing something that made me harder than steel. She turned her back to me, propping one leg on the table and glancing over her shoulders at me, her ass like an offering.

I groaned, trailing my fingers along her slit, loving how her entire body shivered in response, a soft gasp leaving her mouth. It amazed me how drenched she could get so quickly. I could feel her slickness on my fingers before I dipped two of them inside to test her readiness. She was still tight as fuck, but unlike last night, I could go all the way without feeling any resistance. As I sank my hard digits inside her, her flesh parted for me, my fingers sliding along the wetness of her walls.

"Fuck, Austin," she breathed, her hips slowly circling.

Wanting to push her even closer to the edge, I dropped to my knees and licked her

soaking flesh, my cock hardening even more with her sexy groan. Lindsay jutted her ass as if begging for more and finding the perfect angle, I lapped up her juices, gulping hard as I indulged in her sweetness.

"God, yes… that's it," she whispered.

My tongue moved in circles around her clit while my fingers worked her pussy. She bucked against my mouth, her breaths quickening. Just as her moans heightened, I eased away and stood, licking at my mouth and wiping at my chin.

Lindsay spun around and kissed me hard, tasting herself on me. It was the sexiest thing. The most arousing thing. If I waited a second longer, I'd come just from this kiss we'd shared.

I flipped her around, and she repositioned herself, leg hoisted as she leaned forward. I took my cock in hand and rubbed it against her soaking entrance, muttering a curse under my breath before I plunged into her.

Lindsay cried out, but from the tone of her voice, I knew it was one of pure pleasure. I

clenched my teeth and shifted slightly in my spot before pressing further in. Her fingers whitened on the edge of the table as she gripped it hard and moaned throatily.

I pulled back a little, spreading her perfect ass cheeks, watching my cock moving back and forth inside of her. It was the hottest thing I'd ever seen. She was so fucking wet, my cock collecting the cream from her pink flesh.

"Yes, Austin, don't stop. Please, don't stop," she moaned.

She didn't need to tell me twice. I grunted as I gripped her hips and slammed into her. She screamed, her flesh clenching around me with each stroke. Gritting my teeth, I continued to plough her, using all the restraint I could muster not to burst into a million pieces like I wanted to. Lindsay's body hugged me so tight. Too right. Simply driving me insane.

"Fuck, I don't think I have much longer," I gritted out, slowing my pace.

Lindsay pulled herself off, and before I could fathom what was happening, she sank to

her knees in front of me. She looked up at me with those seductive eyes and held my cock, fisting it before taking it into her mouth.

"Oh, fuck!" I exclaimed, closing my eyes as heat encased me. She slid her mouth down my length, only going halfway before coming back up and repeating the same motion.

It was obvious this was her first time by how awkward her movements were, but for some reason, it turned me on even more. When she tentatively brushed her tongue over the tip, I completely lost it.

"I'm gonna come, baby," I grunted, barely recognizing my own voice as I thrust inside her mouth.

Lindsay didn't let up after hearing me. She gripped my ass, her mouth moving faster along the base. Realizing she wanted my cum in her mouth made me bust right away.

Cum spewed to the back of her throat. The force must have caught her by surprise because she drew back a little, but like the trooper she was, she didn't let up. I emptied myself in her mouth, watching as she looked up at me, those pretty lips stretched by my

cock.

A creamy white trail seeped from the corners of her mouth as I finished, and she swept it back into her mouth. I watched in amazement, completely dumbstruck and beyond fascinated.

“You’re amazing, you know that?” I asked as I pulled her up from the floor and wrapped my arms around her. I kissed her hard, tasting myself on her just as she had tasted herself on me earlier.

In that moment, there wasn’t a fucking thing I wouldn’t do for this girl.

I was in love.

Chapter 13

Lindsay

I smiled with contentment, rolling onto my side, staring at Austin, fast asleep in bed. He seemed so peaceful, his eyelashes fanning his cheeks, the hint of a smile on his lips. I chuckled to myself as I imagined him dreaming of our encounter. The memory of swallowing his cum only half an hour ago made me blush. I didn't know what got into me, but I wanted to give him as much pleasure as he gave me. It was an experience having his cock in my mouth, and I didn't regret it one bit.

Leaving the bed, I pulled on his robe, tied the belt around me, then walked to the porch where I'd left the painting. It had already gotten dark and windy, the sound of the waves hurtling back and forth.

I picked up the painting and was amazed all over again as I analyzed the details. It was definitely me, and anyone could

see that. Austin had captured every single tone, the lights, the colors, the curves. I was totally naked, but he'd captured me with the sheets slightly draped over my hips, leaving my belly button exposed. My breasts were hidden by my arm, and my blonde hair cascaded behind me like a waterfall.

My eyes teared up as I took in the beauty of the art piece, my heart filled with gratefulness and pride for Austin. He had an undeniable talent, and the thought behind it meant more to me than words could explain.

My phone buzzed from where I'd left it on the table. I picked it up, and my heart skipped a beat when I saw Amy's name there.

Where are you? Her text message read.

I bit at my nail before I finally replied. *Grabbing something to eat, will be there shortly.*

Ok, if you're at that café we love, grab me a cheese Danish. Thanks xx

Ok, no probs. See you soon.

I sighed heavily before scurrying back inside and picking up my discarded clothes, fully dressed when I got back to the bedroom

with Austin still in deep sleep.

I hated to wake him, but I couldn't leave without saying goodbye. I gently shook him. "Austin."

But he was out cold.

"Babe," I tried again, and he shuffled. I continued to rouse him until he opened his eyes and smiled at me. My stomach fluttered from the emotion I saw there.

"Hey, beautiful," he murmured, stretching.

"I gotta go," I softly said.

My response brought him fully awake, his brows furrowing. "What? It's not even that late," he said, reaching for his watch on the bedside table to check the time.

"I know, but Amy just texted, and she'll be expecting me home soon."

He sighed. "Lindsay, please, why can't we just tell her?"

I huffed as I moved away. "Austin, we've been over this already."

"I know, but it'd be better if we break the news from early–"

“No. I’m not ready to lose my best friend!” I exclaimed.

He frowned. “So what are we doing here, Lindsay? Are you just waiting to get tired of me to end this?”

I gawked at him. “What, no!”

“If we plan on being serious, Amy will have to know, eventually. Unless you aren’t. Unless this is just plain ol’ fun for you.”

“How could you say that?” I asked.

Austin sat up in bed, fixing me with a direct stare. “I’m really into you, Lindsay, and I’d love for this to be more than just a casual fuck.”

“I don’t want this to be a casual fuck, either, Austin, but we both promised to keep this on the down low.”

“That was a stupid promise,” he grumbled.

“I thought you understood,” I replied. “No one can know about us, Austin. Not yet.”

“This is ridiculous. I can’t believe this is now my fucking life.”

“What do you mean?”

He sighed, throwing the sheet back. “I could have any girl I wanted, Lindsay. You’re asking me to settle for being a secret, and that’s not fair—” He caught my widened eyes and sighed. “Fuck.”

“Thank you for showing me your true colors, you prick. Thank you for letting me realize this was a huge mistake.” My voice broke in the end, and I swallowed to keep the tears at bay.

Austin moved toward me. “Lindsay, please. I didn’t mean it like that—”

“Stop.” I raised my hand at him. “Don’t come any further.”

He paused, giving me a pleading stare. “I’m sorry. That was fucked up.”

“Yes, it was,” I agreed, grabbing my bag. “I can’t do this, Austin. Just… forget this ever happened.”

I quickly fled the room, hearing Austin repeatedly call my name in the background. I choked a sob once I got outside and allowed the tears to trail from my eyes, glad that he didn’t chase me. Our fight had left me conflicted. I was mad at him for what he said,

but it was the truth. Austin had no problems getting women. Asking him to sneak around with me was too unfair. I was scared of the outcome if Amy ever found out, but I was even more terrified to lose him. Whatever I decided, I needed space.

I cried all the way to the café, stopping only to order the cheese Danish for Amy. My sniffs were still constant as I made my way back to the dorm, but I got a grip on myself before entering the room I shared with my best friend.

She perked up when she saw me, rubbing her hands together as I raised the paper bag in my hand.

"Eek! Thank you, I'm starving!" she said, grabbing it from me and taking a big bite of the sweet pastry.

I laughed. "I thought you went on a date. Why are you so hungry?"

She rolled her eyes. "I did, but you know how stupid we get trying not to eat around boys while our tummies are growling in anger."

"Speak for yourself. I have no problem

eating on a date."

A brow instantly perked up. "What would you know about eating on a date? Have you been on any?"

I stiffened, realizing what I'd just walked into. As far as Amy knew, I'd dated no one.

"Er, I meant *if* I went on an actual date, I don't think I'd starve myself," I said, making my way over to my bed.

"Hmm, well, you never really know until you're in the situation." Her head tilted as she paused and observed my face. "Are you okay?"

"Yeah, why?" I asked.

"Your eyes seem a little puffy – like you've been crying."

I cleared my throat and rubbed the back of my neck. "My allergies have been acting up is all. I'm fine," I said, managing a smile.

Amy didn't seem convinced, but she nodded. "Did you take your meds?"

"It's not that serious. A decent night's rest and I'll be good as new."

"Okay… if you're sure."

I changed into my PJs and pulled the covers from the bed, glancing over at Amy who was now on her phone. "Good night, Ames."

"Good night, sweetie. I hope you feel better tomorrow."

As soon as my head hit the pillows, my face to the wall, the tears came. Not only did I feel like crap for lying to my best friend, but I also didn't like the way I'd left things with Austin. There must be a way to fix what had quickly turned into my miserable life.

My phone buzzed, and as I picked it up, I realized it was an Instagram text from him.

I'm sorry I made you upset. You're right. We're new, and we don't have to rush this. I just don't want to lose you. Please disregard what I said.

My lower lip trembled, and I clamped down on it hard, trying to stop myself from bursting into tears. Our fight only renewed my insecurity about being out of Austin's league. What did he see in me? Why did he want to be with me?

I'm sorry, too, were the words I felt, but the ones I didn't send.

Chapter 14

Austin

I kept checking my phone every chance I got, hoping to hear from Lindsay, but nothing came. It had been days since she last fled the beach house, and since that time, I hadn't seen or spoken to her.

I contemplated going by her dorm room to talk to Amy just so I could see her, but I stopped myself. What we had wasn't a mistake, but I didn't know where she stood. Maybe our attraction was a mutual one, but the feelings were one-sided. She wasn't in love with me. Not even close.

"Hey, Callaghan; heads up!"

I turned to see a football blasting towards me. It was mere inches away from my face when I caught it.

Jason ran up to me with a grin on his face. "Yo man, what's up with Stella? You hit that, didn't you?"

I frowned. "Wha– who?"

He jerked his head toward the stands, where a brunette held a card with my name on it. She waved rigorously when she saw me. Recognition dawned, and I realized she was the girl I'd met at the party whose DMs I hadn't replied to.

"Oh. Nah, I barely know her."

"Well, it's obvious she's your number one supporter. She's been here all week, cheering you on like she's getting paid." He laughed. "Weird that you're just noticing."

"I've had other things on my mind," I mumbled.

"Like what, dude? She's pretty hot, and you're single. Are you blind?"

I was about to reply when I saw my uncle on the sideline, dressed in a suit—despite the eighty-degree weather— and looking like the older version of my dad. He waved me over, and I sighed before jogging to him.

He greeted me with a smile and slammed his hand against my shoulder. "Looking good, son."

“Thanks, Uncle Ben.”

He smiled, nodding proudly. “Listen, I pulled some strings and scored a meeting for you with a recruiter. If it goes well, we could have you getting drafted by next year.”

I rubbed the back of my neck and pulled in a breath. “Er, that’s awesome.”

“Your father will be flying down to join us. He’s a charmer; we can definitely get a deal with his influence.”

I nodded, my eyes shifting to the stands, catching Stella’s eye. She waved at me, then blew me a kiss.

“I’m just giving you a heads up, so you can be prepared,” Ben nodded curtly, obviously displeased with my distraction.

I cleared my throat, giving him my full attention. “Yeah, I appreciate it, Uncle Ben.”

He gave me one last pat on the shoulder before he left, and I headed to the lockers to change. Once done, I returned outside to find Stella on the field, her little poster in her hand while she stood there.

I was about to make a quick escape, she

spotted me, a grin on her face as she ran up to me.

"Austin, hey."

I managed a tight smile and met her halfway. "Hey."

"You remember me, right? I've been texting you on Instagram, but you haven't replied." She bit her lip, making a pout I would normally find cute, but since Lindsay, it did nothing for me.

I scratched the back of my head. "Yeah, been crazy busy; you know how it is."

"Yeah, yeah… I understand – quarterback duties," she laughed.

"That's about right." I jerked my thumb at the exit. "I should get going…"

"Maybe I could walk with you?" she suggested.

My mind said no at once, but when I opened my mouth, I said, "Sure, why not?"

It was just a simple walk. Totally innocent.

Right?

I moved off, and Stella jogged to keep up with me, her short legs no match for my long strides. Despite trying to create a little distance between us, Stella remained right at my hip.

"I was thinking maybe we could hang out when you're not so busy..." she said.

A soft sigh left my mouth, and I stopped abruptly. "Listen, Stella, you're a beautiful girl, but–"

"You've got a girlfriend already," Stella cut in. "Of course you do, you're Austin Callaghan." She moved closer, running her fingers down my chest. "I don't mind sharing, you know."

I opened my mouth to reply when I saw Amy moving toward us. My heart skipped a beat as I spotted Lindsay beside her. I could feel the blood drain from my face.

"Hey, big brother!" Amy exclaimed, lunging into my arms.

I wrapped my arms around her, staring at Lindsay over her head. Lindsay glanced from me to Stella, her brow raising just a tad before she cut her eyes at me.

Shit.

Amy drew back and spotted Stella, who she gave a sly grin. “Ooh… I see you followed my advice to shoot your shot.”

My forehead wrinkled as Stella scoffed. “Oh, I’m trying to, but your brother’s putting up a fight,” she replied.

Amy’s brows lifted at me. “Are you kidding me? Do you not see all that?” She ran her hand along Stella’s body. “She’s totally your type.”

I scratched the back of my neck, trying to find an excuse to get the hell out of there. I’d never felt so awkward in my life.

“Seems Mr. Handsome here is already taken,” Stella said.

“By who?” Amy was quick to ask, giving me a questioning look.

I glanced at Lindsay, whose eyes were locked on the book in her hand, an unreadable expression on her face. Did she even care that her best friend wanted to hook me up with another girl? It didn’t seem that way.

“Have you been holding out on me,

Austin?" Amy asked, nudging my shoulder. "Who are you seeing?"

"No one," I blurted, the words flying out so fast, I couldn't stop them. My body went rigid. I glanced over and Lindsay, and the look on her face…

Fuck.

Utter devastation.

She recovered quickly, forcing a smile, one that made me feel like an even bigger asshole.

"Okay then, if you're not seeing anyone, what's the problem?" Amy asked.

Lindsay cut in by clearing her throat—a saving grace, stopping from digging a bigger hole. "Come on, Ames, we're gonna be late," she said, taking Amy's arm.

Amy checked her watch and gasped. "Oh crap, we do need to go. I'll see you lovebirds around – hopefully, we can double date soon!" she said, winking.

Oh, fuck my life.

I managed a tight smile as I watched them leave, my eyes on Lindsay the entire

time.

"I get it now."

My gaze snapped to Stella. "Huh?"

"You've got a thing for your sister's friend," she said, giving me a smirk mixed with a pissed off attitude.

"What are you talking about?" I asked.

"I saw the way you looked at her – it's pretty obvious, Austin." She came closer, the smirk deepening. "Although, I have a feeling your sister has no clue."

Stella ran her fingers down my chest, and I caught her hand. "That's none of your business–"

"Isn't it?" She cocked her head. "I bet sister dearest wouldn't be so pleased if she found out, would she? I'm sure you wouldn't want to ruin the relationship with your only sibling."

"What do you want?" I asked, getting to the point.

"For you to claim me as your girl," she replied simply.

"Why? It's obvious I'm not into you."

A hurt look crossed her features; then she managed a smile. “I need an influencer status, and you’re my key.” She shrugged. “Besides, you can’t deny how great we look together. Think of the eyes that would turn whenever we entered a room.”

“Contrary to what social media makes you believe, I’m not a superficial guy, Stella. I could give two fucks about the spotlight.”

Stella sneered. “Stop lying. I’ve seen the way you carry yourself, with that big dick energy everyone can’t help but notice. You love being seen. Everyone does.”

I didn’t need to keep arguing with this girl. “Think whatever you want, Stella. It won’t change the truth.”

“Think about my offer, will you? That way, I won’t tell Amy about your little crush.” With a chuckle, she walked away, her hips swinging with more rhythm than usual.

I raked a hand through my hair. “Fuck.”

Did anyone else notice how into Lindsay I was? Carter had picked up on it, and now, so did Stella. Was I so transparent with my feelings for my sister’s best friend? If so, why

couldn't Lindsay see it?

Stella's threat didn't scare me. In fact, I wished she would tell Amy about what she suspected. Who knew? It would probably force Lindsay to face her feelings for me out in the open. Which is exactly what I wanted.

Until then, I had damage control on my hands. After the stunt Amy pulled earlier, I didn't want Lindsay getting any ideas about me and Stella. I had to see her and clear the air before it was too late.

Chapter 15

Lindsay

I should have listened to my mom when she told me to guard my heart against boys. She'd been pounding the same message in my head since I was sixteen, and guys had started hanging around. Men lied, they cheated, they couldn't be trusted, and they would break your heart without a care in the world.

At first, I took her advice, but ever since Austin and I kissed on prom night, I'd buried it at the back of my head. Now, when I realized how right she was, it was already too late to guard my heart. It was already in shambles, destroyed by the one guy I thought wouldn't hurt me.

Our fight was only a few days ago, yet he was already hooking up with someone else. Someone hotter, someone in his league, a girl who'd look much better on his arm than I did. A painful lump formed in my throat. If I weren't in Amy's company, I'd be crying my

eyes out.

Amy didn't make the situation any better, either. She kept going on about Austin and Stella, how hot they were and what a great couple they'd make. I wanted to shout at her to shut up, but Amy didn't deserve my anger. She was oblivious to everything going on.

My phone beeped with an incoming message. I reached for it, frowning when I saw Austin's name on the screen.

I need to see you, his text read.

My heart flipped with happiness, but I forced the joy away, hardening it with the memory of him and Stella. *Funny, I thought you were already seeing Stella,* I texted back.

Stella and I aren't together, Lindsay.

Bullshit. I was there when Amy set you up, remember?

There was a slight pause; then he started typing back. My breath paused as I waited.

I don't want to do this over the phone. Come by the beach house at around 7, please.

I started to write a reply but cleared it off immediately.

"Who are you texting with that intense look on your face?" Amy asked.

I almost dropped the phone, and I hoped she didn't read the guilt on my face. "Er – no one."

She shrugged it off and went on to a different topic while I sat there pondering over the text messages. The responsible action was an obvious one; leave Austin alone, forget that we even happened. But that was impossible. As long as he was around, I couldn't stay away.

I was still angry, but I wanted clarity more than anything, so even though I didn't tell him I'd stop by, I knew I would.

That evening, I hoped Amy would head out to see Jason, but when she stayed, I searched my mind for a reasonable excuse to leave. I'd already showered and changed, waiting on the answer to come to me.

When nothing creative came to mind, I muttered, "Fuck it," then grabbed my bag. "Hey, Ames, I'm going to get some fresh air;

I'll be back soon."

Her brows bunched together as she sat up in bed. "Everything okay?"

"Yeah, everything's fine." I managed a smile.

"Want some company?"

"Er, no, I'm good. I won't be long."

She laid back down, reaching for the book she'd been reading. "Okie."

I grabbed my phone and walked slowly out of the room. When the door closed, I made a dash down the stairs. Not wanting to drive with my mind in such a mess, the Uber I'd called was already waiting, and in no time, it pulled up at the beach house. I glanced down at my fitted jeans and T-shirt as I knocked and waited for Austin to open up. A casual yet sexy outfit, not screaming desperate. I didn't want Austin to get any ideas since I only came to talk.

In less than a minute, the door swung open, and there he was, looking so yummy in a light pink T-shirt that hugged his torso, his hair golden under the lights.

His Adam's apple bobbed as his gaze ran over me, triggering a longing that spread from head to toe. "I'm glad you could make it," he said.

I hugged my shoulders. "Yeah, you said you wanted to talk, so here I am."

"Come in," he said, moving to the side.

Being here again brought back all the memories. From where I was, I could see the table where we made love the last time, and I couldn't help the heat that instantly warmed my cheeks.

"Can I get you something to drink?" he offered.

"No, I won't be here long. I've gotta get back before Amy gets suspicious."

An annoyed look flashed across his face so fast, I wondered if I'd imagined it, then he nodded and approached me. "I missed you, Lindsay."

I crossed my arms protectively on my chest. "Didn't seem like it. You and Stella seemed so cozy today."

He scoffed and rolled his eyes. "There's

nothing going on between me and Stella. You know that."

"Actually, I don't know, Austin. That's the thing, we barely know shit about each other."

"And all I'm asking for is a chance to change that. I want to be with you. I want to know everything about you."

I rubbed at my temples. "I can't be with you."

"Why?" he snapped, his jaw tightening. "Don't give me that bullshit about Amy. If you really wanted to be with me, you wouldn't be scared to tell her the truth."

"How could you say that?" I spat. "Amy's my friend—my only friend. You know that. I can't lose her, Austin."

"You won't. Sure, Amy will be mad at first, but she'll eventually see reason."

"I don't see that happening."

"Then what, Lindsay? We're over, just like that?"

I remained silent as tears stung my eyes, unable to find the right words to say.

“I know you want me as much as I fucking want you,” he said, moving closer to me. My heart flipped in my chest, every inch of my body alert in his presence.

“Tell me you don’t miss this — us being together, my hands touching you.” His fingers trailed down my skin, making me moan. “Me being inside you.” His breath fanned my ear, and a shiver ran through me.

I pulled in a jagged breath. “Austin…”

“I love you, Lindsay – there I said it – I think I’ve been in love with you from the very moment we kissed two years ago, and heck, I might not know everything about you, but I’d like that chance. I want you. Only you.”

I froze, feeling breathless despite standing still. I wasn’t expecting those words. My heart rejoiced, happiness running through me in waves. Tears of joy sprang from my eyes because it was too much to keep in.

I opened my mouth to replicate those three magical words because I felt the same way. But Austin pressed a finger against my lips, forcing them back down my throat.

“Shh, you don’t have to say anything.

Just let me love you for tonight and always."

I closed my eyes, throwing my head back as his lips found my throat, his fingers working to loosen the buttons on my pants.

My fingers raked through his silky soft hair, my body in shambles as each touch aroused me even more. I kissed him, the feeling almost brand new yet so familiar. I missed this, I missed him, and like the compliant girl I was, I caved in.

We kissed hard with such urgency that made my knees buckle. My hands found the hem of his shirt, and I hauled it over his head, desperately needing to feel him against me – inside me.

When we were both completely naked, he lifted me, and I wrapped my legs around him, his cock grazing my entrance. He anchored me against the wall, and I gasped as my skin met contact with the coolness that clashed with my burning skin.

Austin nibbled my neck, his hands supporting my legs as our bodies ground against each other.

"Now," I managed, my eyes fluttering as

I tried to make sense of the pleasure coursing through me.

Austin plunged into me, his cock immediately hitting a sweet spot that had me moaning aloud. I clung to him, my body humming as he thrust into me over and over, each stroke getting deeper. My hands found his buttocks, and I dragged my fingers along his flesh, admiring how effortlessly he pleasured me. Every toned muscle was emphasized and in perfect glory as he moved inside me. I gasped with each stroke, arching my neck, never wanting this insane pleasure to end.

Just as the pressure started to increase, Austin pulled out and put me down. I only had time to glimpse his lust-filled eyes before he spun me around and entered me from behind. My body shivered, and my knees buckled as he grabbed my breast, fucking me hard, my ass smacking against him.

His other hand found my clit, and I gasped, my mind reeling from the ecstasy surging through me. He knew exactly where to touch, and when he circled the most sensitive

spot on my clit, I fell apart. With one sharp thrust, my limbs grew weak, and my knees buckled. My orgasm moved through me like a tidal wave, the screams frozen on my lips, leaving my mouth hanging open.

With a deep thrust and a loud grunt, Austin squeezed my tits, and once again, I experienced the warmth of his cum inside me. He held me up while tremors racked my body, my limbs turning to mush as I reveled in my release.

**

I should've passed out from that mind-blowing orgasm, but arousal still rushed through me, triggered by Austin's love for me and knowing I truly loved him. Yes, it was the perfect way to describe what I felt for him. Love. I didn't realize how truly in love with him I was until he confessed it.

"Oh, my God," I exclaimed as Austin pulled me back onto his cock, my back slightly raised off the bed as he tightly gripped my hips.

My tits bounced back and forth in my

chest from his swift movements. I reached for them, massaging them with my hands, moaning as I pinched my sensitive nipples, my pussy tightening around Austin's cock.

He moaned as he lowered me and leaned forward, still stroking me while sweat glistened on every inch of his toned skin. He pushed my legs back to my tits, my pussy completely exposed to him with his gaze fastened there.

Austin groaned as he pressed inside me, sinking deep, lingering there for a second as he muttered a curse. My gasps pierced the room as he picked up the pace, fucking me so hard my vision blurred. Just when I thought he'd come, he pulled out and slapped his cock against my pussy. I trembled, my legs almost snapping shut as I saw stars. Austin pried them open again before he entered me once more with a soft pop.

I closed my eyes and bit my lips, enjoying the way he slid in and out of me effortlessly – the perfect fit.

"Touch yourself," he grunted, and my eyes opened to find his dark eyes on me, his

face serious and demanding, making my pussy clench.

With a bit of hesitance, I slid my hands along my sweaty body and found my clit with my middle finger. My body jolted as I circled it, and I saw the smirk on Austin's face as he moved slowly inside me.

My fingers glided over the slippery nub, more pleasure erupting inside me as my juices lubricated Austin's cock.

My eyes rolled back in my head, my pussy clenching as I rubbed myself even faster. I didn't want the pleasure to end, so each time the climax beat at my gate, I pulled back, and Austin pulled out. My pussy was only empty for a few seconds before he went back in, moaning loudly as he slid his hands up and down my legs.

"Oh, shit," he exclaimed, pulling out just enough, leaving only the tip inside me. My body shivered as he dispensed his cum inside, then pulled out. A thick, creamy trail seeped out from my entrance. Austin shoved his solid length inside me again, taking me by surprise.

His hands trembled as he forced his sensitive cock in, forcing his cum back inside me. He sighed heavily when he inched his length inside, immediately moving back and forth. Five deep thrusts later left me shivering from ecstasy, my eyes rolling over as I grabbed his thick arms.

I screamed, and he gripped my legs tightly as he emptied himself inside me yet again. This time, as soon as we recovered from our climax, he pulled out, falling beside me on the bed.

“You’re one in a million, baby girl,” he said breathlessly, kissing me on the cheek.

I smiled, trying to catch my breath, wanting to cuddle up against him, but the slickness between my thighs left me uncomfortable. Deciding to shower before I returned to the dorm, I left the bed, not realizing how sore I was until I started to move.

As soon as the warm blast of water hit my skin, Austin appeared at the door with a wicked grin on his face. He stepped into the stall and pulled me in for a kiss, our wet

bodies grinding against each other. Instead of taking me again like I expected, Austin took his time to wash every inch of me until I was squeaky clean.

"I think there's a blow dryer somewhere around that you could use," he said as we stepped out. He immediately started searching the cupboards, a smile lighting up his face when he found it.

I smiled and kissed him. "Perfect."

I was about to switch it on when a pounding came from the front door. My head snapped to Austin, who looked just as confused as me.

"Who could that be?" I whisper, alarm bells ringing. I didn't want our cover blown. Not until I figured out a way to confess to my best friend.

The knocking at the door came again, and my heart pounded in my chest. "Stay here, I'll go check," Austin said, tension tightening his face.

I plugged out the dryer and put my clothes on. A gnawing feeling settled in my stomach. It wasn't a good sign. Shit was about

to hit the fan.

Chapter 16

Lindsay

My blood ran cold when I heard Amy's loud voice in the living room. My heart fell on the floor of my stomach, the pulse beating loudly in my ear. Taking a deep breath, I turned the handle of the bathroom door, ready to face the music.

"Where is she?" Amy shouted, and the tears instantly pooled in my eyes.

"Can you calm down?" I heard Austin say. "I'm not letting you near her until you do."

Too late. His response came as I stepped into the living room, gasping when I saw Carter there as well, a smirk on his face.

"Gotcha," he said with a snicker.

Amy twisted to face me, her body trembling with rage, tears pouring down her face. I saw the disappointment in her eyes and

immediately wanted to sink through the floor.

"You fucking bitch! How could you?" she shouted, spit flying. I flinched.

"Hey, Amy, chill," Austin intervened, reaching for his sister.

"Don't touch me, you asshole!" she snapped, glaring at him for a split second before her gaze returned to me. I could only cry in response, my world crumbling around me.

"Carter came to me that night at the party," she said, hands shaking. "He told me Austin had a thing for you, and I didn't want to believe him." She paused, then sniffled. "He told me to look out for the signs, and I did, but I still didn't want to believe it."

"Amy," I managed, my voice quivering.

"I caught onto your silly little excuses, I saw the way you both looked at each other, I – I saw how you reacted whenever I mentioned Austin or even when he was close by. I fucking saw it all, Lindsay. Yet, all this time you've been lying to my fucking face!" she cried.

I sniffed. "Amy, I never meant to hurt

you–”

A slap to my face silenced me and brought more tears to my eyes. “I don’t want to hear a fucking word! You knew my take on relationships like this, and you went behind my back and fucked my brother, anyway.”

Austin tried to reach for her again, but she tugged herself from his hold. “All this time, you’ve been acting holier than thou, giving me lectures about not being a slut in college while you’ve been the biggest one this entire time.”

I flinched at her words.

“That’s enough, Amy!” Austin exclaimed.

She slowly turned to him. “And you, I thought you were my brother. I looked up to you. Now, you mean nothing to me, I swear.”

Austin visibly swallowed. “Be angry at me all you want, I can take it, but don’t be mad at Lindsay. She’s felt like crap this entire time. The last thing she wanted to do was hurt you.”

Amy scoffed. “And yet she continued to

fuck you. I bet my feelings were the furthest thing from her mind," she snarled.

"See, all this could've been avoided if you'd gone out with me instead," Carter chipped in with a smirk.

Austin's expression hardened as he marched over and collared him. "Get the hell out of my house!" he roared.

"No!" Amy cut in. "This is my place as much as yours. Carter stays. If it hadn't been for him, I would be living in the dark, not knowing the two people I loved the most betrayed me."

My heart broke into a dozen pieces. "I'm sorry, Amy."

"Your apologies mean nothing to me now, Lindsay!" she snapped, her eyes wide and blank.

Austin raked his fingers through his hair. "I never wanted to hurt you – none of us did – but I've been in love with Lindsay for years, and I've kept it a secret just as long, but after being here and seeing her again after such a long time, I couldn't stay away."

Amy blinked, and I squeezed my eyes shut, wanting to strangle Austin.

Amy choked a dry laugh. “Love?” She looked at me as if searching for confirmation, and when I didn’t respond, she scoffed. “You know what, I’m done with this.”

She turned to leave, and I reached for her hand, only for her to slap it away. With an index finger pointed at my face, she said, “you fucking stay away from me! You’re dead to me!” She glanced at Austin. “Both of you.”

She walked away with Carter following behind, sealing the door with a hard slam. A sob broke free from my lips, and I broke down, tears running like a river down my cheeks. Austin rushed to my side, wrapping his arms around me, but after what just happened, the last thing I wanted was for him to touch me.

“Don’t,” I said, taking a step back. “You’ve only made things worse.”

“Amy already knew the truth, Lindsay. I was only coming clean with everything,” he said, confusion filling his face. “I don’t get why you’re mad at me.”

“This is what you wanted all along, wasn’t it?” I accused.

“Not like this!” he exclaimed. “I didn’t want this shit show, believe me.”

I wrapped my arms around myself, sobbing. “I knew this would happen. I knew she would be angry, and I knew she’d hate us.”

“Amy just needs some time to cool off. She’ll come around,” Austin assured.

I shook my head, totally not convinced. “I gotta do damage control.”

He held my hand. “Stay here; give her some time.”

“I can’t,” I cried. “Maybe I was right the first time, Austin. Maybe this was a huge mistake.”

He swallowed, his dark blue eyes strained on me. “Don’t say that. Loving you can never be a mistake, I know that.”

I tugged my hand from his and moved toward the front door, wiping the tears from my face.

“Lindsay, don’t do this. Don’t walk

away," Austin called, but I was already outside, taking one last glance at his sad face before I closed the door behind me.

I sobbed all the way back to my dorm, dreading a further confrontation with Amy. I understood her words, I knew they came from a place of hurt, and I hated myself for being the reason. I'd promised not to get involved with Austin, but I did the opposite, knowing the truth would eventually come out. I just never expected it would be so soon.

I pulled in a breath when I arrived at my dorm, bracing for the onslaught. With a bit of hesitance, I pushed the door open and opened my mind to a few possibilities of how this would turn out. To my surprise, the room was empty – Amy wasn't back as yet, or she probably went to Jason's to cool off.

Relief filled me as I walked over to my side of the room and curled under the blankets, crying simply because I couldn't stop the tears. There was too much to think about, too much to process. In just a few hours, Austin had confessed his love for me, and in another split second, my world had crumbled

around me. I didn't know what to do or how to make this better.

Everything was completely ruined.

Chapter 17

Lindsay

I might have gotten two hours of sleep after staying up all night, replaying the scenes in my head and crying over them. I woke up to shuffling, my heart pounding when I saw Amy on her side of the room, packing her knapsack.

I swallowed hard and carefully eased up as I looked over at her. Her back faced me, and my lips parted to speak, but then I clamped them back shut, not knowing exactly what to say.

"Amy, I'm sorry I didn't tell you the truth earlier," I finally blurted, watching as she stiffened and paused for a split second before she returned to packing.

"I knew you'd be upset, and that's why I said nothing, but I really love Austin. I'm not sure when it happened, but it did, and I'm so sorry I hurt you," I continued.

She finally turned to me with a scowl on her face, but I could see the tears in her eyes.

“I’m gonna ask my uncle for a transfer to another room. Maybe when I’m gone, you and Austin can shack up together,” she said before pulling her bag from the bed and storming out the door.

My lips trembled as the door closed with a hard slam that made me flinch. This was probably the end of our friendship – I could feel it. Amy wasn’t a forgiving person. and what I did was heavy duty. There was no way she would look past it. Our lives would never be normal again. The thought of our friendship ending broke me more than anything could.

The buzzing phone on the bed pulled my attention. Checking the screen, I realized it was Austin, and my heart swelled in my chest.

Are you okay? his text read.

I contemplated not answering, but he didn’t deserve that after being so sweet this entire time.

She’s still not talking to me, I replied.

Don’t worry about it. Amy will come around, trust me.

I pulled in a breath and put the phone down. She was his sister, which meant he'd known her longer than me, but Amy and I were much closer. She would never get over this. Ever.

I went through classes like a zombie, my mind trying to form a plan to win my best friend back. Amy wasn't giving me the time of day, no matter how many texts I sent out.

**

It was the weekend, and the Bruins had another game. I wanted to support Austin, but I figured my presence would only add fire to fuel if Amy saw me there. Besides, it was the perfect time to visit my mom.

That afternoon, as I packed a bag, Amy came in, a frown on her face as she moved to her side of the room. I bit my lips, waiting for her to greet me, but she didn't. "I'm visiting my parents for the weekend," I said.

No response.

"I'll be back on Sunday."

Amy pulled in a breath. "I'll let you know when I give a fuck," she said as she cut

her eyes at me.

It hurt to hear those words, but I reminded myself that this was my fault. This wouldn't be happening if I hadn't gone behind my best friend's back. Wordlessly, I finished packing my bags and left the dorm room with a single goodbye that Amy didn't respond to.

I put my phone on Do Not Disturb and prepared myself for the journey ahead. I doubt heading to Colorado would clear my mind or make me feel better about anything, but with my mom's never-ending list of problems, I'd be a bit distracted from my crumbling life.

The five-hour flight gave me time to think, and I loathed myself for still having Austin on my mind throughout this ordeal. Amy should be my priority, yet as I watched the clouds pass around me, it reminded me of times with Austin when I felt like I'd been on Cloud 9. He made me happy, and that was the hard part. My life would be better with him in it. Reality sucked because everything I hoped and dreamed between us was just fiction in the real world.

As long as he was Amy's brother, we

couldn't be together. I couldn't be with Austin, knowing Amy hated me, knowing I'd ended years of friendship because of a guy. Her brother.

What if Austin broke my heart? What if he woke up tomorrow and realized his feelings for me weren't real? I'd have no one. The two persons I truly cared about would be gone.

This was a no-win situation. I'd always end up the loser.

**

The cab dropped me off, and I pulled my small carryon along, pausing as I stared at the two-story house that I'd spent my entire life living in, with Amy just across the road. Dad's truck wasn't in the driveway, but Mom's SUV was. No surprise. Dad was never home when it mattered.

I pulled in a breath and walked up the driveway, my steps heavy. I knocked as soon as I reached the large front door and braced myself to see my mom. When she opened up, a

glass of wine in hand, her blue eyes widened, and her lips trembled. In the next second, she had me in her arms, sobbing, and I just couldn't help my own tears.

When we finally parted, she brushed at her cheeks and smiled at me. "Why didn't you tell me you were coming today?" she asked, sniffing.

"I wanted to surprise you."

"Oh, you shouldn't have. I would have looked more presentable," she said, pulling at her satin robe.

I snickered. "Mom, I've seen you like this a thousand times before."

She smiled as she reached for my bag and ushered me inside. "I hope your flight was good."

"Yeah, except for my neighbor almost boring me to death with his constant yapping, it wasn't half bad," I said, following her to the living room. "Where's Dad?"

Mom rolled her eyes and took a sip of her wine. "Who knows at this point," she scoffed.

I peered at her closely, taking in the dark circles around her eyes. “Are you okay, Mom?”

She smiled briefly, raking her fingers through her hair. “You’re here now; of course I am. We have a lot to catch up on.” She pinched my chin and made her way to the kitchen. “Take your bags to your room honey, I’ll be down here.”

I nodded and moved upstairs to my bedroom, which held so many memories of my childhood. The sheets had been changed, but everything else remained the same. From my window, I could see the Callaghan’s house, the biggest in the neighborhood. I remembered when Amy would sneak over or vice versa, our nights filled with endless giggles as we played games and stalked the Instagram pages of the popular girls at school. Austin was mostly at his friends’ houses or chasing skirts, but every time he came home, I’d hear his truck entering the street and rush to the windows to see him.

Sometimes, he snuck in girls, and other times, he tried to sneak himself in after breaking curfew. The sneaky watching

continued for some time until he noticed and turned to smile and wave each time.

Funny how things could change so drastically over time. I no longer lusted after my crush because I finally had him– only for him to slip through my fingers again.

"Honey, is everything okay?" I heard my mom ask, jolting me from my thoughts.

I didn't even know how long I'd been standing there, but Mom wore a concerned look as she slowly entered the room and sat on the bed.

"Aren't the Callaghan's home?" I inquired about Austin's parents.

"No, they drove out early today. Jessica mentioned Austin had a big game that they didn't want to miss."

I tore my gaze away and nodded. "Yeah."

"I thought you'd be there – for Amy's sake, at least. You know she always liked your company."

I cleared my throat. "Amy and I aren't really on speaking terms, Mom."

Her green eyes widened. “Oh, honey, is everything okay?”

My lips trembled, and the dam I’d held back for so long broke free. Without waiting for a single word, Mom rushed toward me and pulled me in her arms. I cried even harder.

Chapter 18

Austin

“You call that a fucking game?” My father exclaimed from behind me, his tone heavy with fury.

From the center of the living room of the beach house, I bit my lip, holding back an angry retort. The game was a shit show, and I felt awful that we lost. I didn’t need Dad’s crap on top of it.

“I could have gone out there and done better!” he roared.

With teeth clenched, I turned on my heels, then stopped dead. He almost bumped into me, his angular jaw rigid as he stared me down.

“Then why didn’t you?” I snapped.

Amy and my mom stood at the other end of the room, staring at us, while my dad and I stood face to face in a challenge.

His jaw clenched. “There were recruiters

there, Austin, plus friends I invited to see you perform, and all you did was embarrass me!"

"Sucks to have your expectations so high. You know what they say," I shrugged as I turned to walk away.

My body halted when he grabbed my shoulders and spun me around. "Don't fucking tempt me, Austin. You know what I can do."

I met his icy gaze. "And here I am, not giving a fuck. Your macho act doesn't scare me, Dad. I'm not a kid anymore."

His nostrils flared, and the muscles in his jaw flexed as he glared at me. I did the same, not backing down for even a second. I was in a piss-poor mood after not hearing from Lindsay. Amy was still being a bitch, shutting me out, too. I was slowly losing my mind. I tried my very best at winning, but there was only so much I could do. I gave one hundred percent to a game I didn't even give a fuck about, and there was still no appreciation. What was the fucking point?

"Can you guys just calm down, please? Hunter, honey, I'm sure Austin did his best," my mom intervened.

One glare from my dad had her backing away, her lips sealed. No surprise there.

"Austin's just in a shitty mood cause his girlfriend dumped him," Amy said, rolling her eyes and crossing her arms.

"And what a fucking friend you are. Lindsay's missing, and you can't even put aside being a bitch for one second to find out if she's okay."

"Lindsay's missing?" my mom asked, gasping. "Does Althea and Derek know about this?"

Amy's face went red as a beet. "She isn't missing, you asshole!" she shouted at me.

"Then why can't I get through to her?" I exclaimed. She hadn't answered my texts or phone calls. I searched for her in the stands. She wasn't there.

"Did you ever think she just doesn't want you to find her?" Amy asked.

"Wait, what's happening here?" my mom said, her forehead creasing.

"My ex-best friend and my brother have been screwing behind my back this whole

time!" she exclaimed. Mom turned reproachful eyes on me, intensifying my anger.

"I don't get why you're so butt-hurt. I'd assume that as long as we're both happy, then nothing else matters, but you're so selfish, Amy, that our feelings didn't even cross your mind. You'd rather have Lindsay behind you like a fucking lapdog, doing as you say, doing God knows what for your benefit. It's always about you, isn't it, Amy?" I exclaimed, and tears pooled in Amy's eyes.

"I trusted you two!" she said, her voice breaking. "How could you betray me like this?"

"How did we betray you? Lindsay has done nothing but put you first, and you couldn't even be understanding. You didn't even give her a chance!"

Amy's chest rose and fell as she breathed, and I watched a calm return to her face. Without another word, she grabbed her bag and stormed out, leaving me still at a hundred. There wasn't any calming me anytime soon.

I raked my hand through my hair and

looked at my parents. Dad stood over by the liquor cabinet, filling his tumbler with scotch. Mom massaged her temples, stress lining her face.

"I'm quitting football," I announced.

Mom and Dad turned to me at once, both wearing matching expressions of shock. "What?" They exclaimed in unison.

I smiled, feeling how good it was to get the news off my chest. "After this season, I'm done. I don't want to play anymore. Being with Lindsay made me realize that more than ever."

"Have you lost your mind?" my dad raged, slamming his tumbler on the counter.

I stared at him calmly, unfazed by his outburst. "Quite the opposite; I've never felt this sane."

"Okay, honey, maybe you just need some time to cool off," Mom suggested.

"I'm fine, Mom," I said, laughing. "This was never my dream; it was Dad's, but now I'm done living for him."

I was halfway up the stairs when his

voice stopped me. “If you quit, I’ll cut you off – you’ll lose everything, Austin.”

I shrugged. “Okay. Do your worst, Dad.”

Silence followed me as I continued to my room.

**

A day later, when the dust had somewhat settled, I made my way down to the beach. The fresh air, the sun on my skin would all be perfect if I had Lindsay by my side to share the moment with me. I retrieved my phone from my pocket again, checking if she’d replied to the messages I’d sent, but there was still nothing. I figured she needed her space, but all I needed was a sign to know she was okay.

As I gazed upon the roaring sea, I couldn’t help smiling when I remembered Lindsay’s first night here. The shock on her face when she ran into the ice-cold water and realized how cold it was, the feel of her soft skin, the bliss on her face as I’d made love to her. It was probably the best night of my entire life, and every other time I spent with Lindsay was close seconds.

I was in love with her; I could feel it in every fiber of my being. Not being able to have her now felt like something inside me was missing.

A shadow appeared in my vision, and my heart raced for a moment, thinking it was Lindsay, but the familiar scent of cherry blossom perfume told me it wasn't her.

"Lindsay will be back tomorrow," Amy assured me.

I whipped around to look at her. "Where is she?"

"She's visiting her mom," she said after a second.

Relief consumed me, and I couldn't help the brief smile that played at my lips. "Thanks for telling me."

Amy nodded. An awkward silence settled between us, battling with the guilt that filled me. "Hey, Ames, about what I said –"

"You were right," she cut in. "I didn't consider you being happy together, and I should have. My opinion shouldn't have mattered as long as you guys wanted to be

together."

I nodded. "Still… I said some ugly things."

She forced a smile. "None that wasn't true, and hey, I said some pretty nasty things about you guys the other day, too, and I'm sorry for that."

I smiled as I stood, dusting sand from my shorts. "You should know we didn't mean to hurt you. Everything happened so fast, and we… we just went with the flow, Ames."

She nodded, smiling. "You really love her?"

I nodded, my stomach fluttering at the thought. "With all my heart."

"Lindsay loves you too. She isn't the most open, but she does."

"How do you even know that?" I ask.

"Because she risked our friendship to be with you," she said simply.

I grinned and ruffled my hair. "God, this is insane."

"It is, and so is you quitting football," she said, her expression shifting to sternness.

“Mom told me about your announcement yesterday.”

I pulled in a breath. “I want to follow my own path, Ames.”

“I know, and I’m proud of you, but are you sure, Austin? I don’t think Dad was joking about cutting you off.”

“I know he wasn’t, but I don’t care. I’ve never been so sure about anything in my life.”

She sighed. “Buckle up, bro. It’s going to be a bumpy ride.”

“I’ll be fine, sis,” I said, pulling her in for a hug.

Chapter 19

Lindsay

"Sweetheart, you don't have to live your life fearing the same thing that happened between me and your dad will happen to you," my mom said with a smile as she placed her hand atop of mine.

"Mom…"

"I said some crazy things to you – some I'll never forgive myself for, but love exists, Honey. If you think Austin is the right one, then go for it."

I looked down at my pancakes, still feeling a bit awkward from this conversation with my mom. We'd talked about boys, but nothing specific. I'd never had a boyfriend issue before.

"It isn't so easy, Mom. There's Amy…"

She scoffed and fanned me off playfully. "Amy is your best friend; she'll come around. She might be hurting now, but a true friend will eventually see reason."

“I don’t know… you should’ve seen the look on her face, heard the things she said… I don’t think we’ll come back from this.”

“Listen to me, sweetheart. Not everyone gets lucky enough to find love — it sucks that I wasn’t among them— but I’ve realized there’s still time if I truly want to. Austin has done nothing wrong, and that boy has always been a polite and smart kid – if he says he loves you, I believe it,” she nodded as if that was final.

“This isn’t just about his feelings for me. I can’t be with Austin knowing Amy doesn’t approve,” I said.

“Aim to please yourself, darling, not people. I just discovered that last night,” she giggled.

“Mom…” I scolded.

“What?” she dragged. “It might seem selfish, especially in your situation, but you don’t want to live with regrets. One person can make you happy for the rest of your life, or it can be the opposite. You just have to choose wisely.”

“But what if Austin and I are just in the

honeymoon phase, and it fizzles after a time?"

Her forehead wrinkled as she gave it thought. "Well… that's a very good question, but you just have to trust your gut."

"Didn't you trust your gut with Dad?"

She sighed heavily. "In retrospect, I don't think your dad and I were ever in love. The chemistry was great, and we were compatible in bed. He was a popular guy, and I made it a goal to be with him because I wanted the spotlight, too. When we finally got together, it worked because we were both so outgoing and spontaneous, but then I got pregnant, and reality hit hard."

I swallowed. Mom must have seen the look on my face because she was quick to continue.

"Honey, don't get me wrong; we both love you, I just think your father is all types of fucked up. Having you was the best thing that ever happened to me. I haven't exactly been mother of the decade, but you're the only thing that ever truly made me happy."

I smiled. "Thanks, Mom."

She patted my hand. “You can’t imagine how much it means to me to see you opening up to me like this,” her voice broke. “To be talking about boys…” She laughed, and I couldn’t help but join in. “I’m really grateful, sweetie.”

I got up to hug her. “I love you, Mom, and I’m glad I came.”

She dabbed at her eyes, her smile contagious. “I just feel so horrible for everything I said to you about boys and love. It’s just that, from my own experience, I didn’t want the same thing to happen to you, but you being here and telling me about Austin, I’ve had some time to reflect, and I’m so sorry if I made you believe there was no love at your age,” she sniffed.

“Mom..”

“Your dad and I got together for the wrong reasons. It doesn’t mean you will, too. I see the look on your face and hear the words from your mouth, which confirms you’re in love with Austin. Sweetheart, take the risk and be happy. Life is too short.”

I sniffed as I reached for her hand and

gave it a gentle squeeze.

**

Around midday, I was getting ready to leave for the airport when I heard the doorbell ring downstairs. I continued to pack, then pulled my bag downstairs once I was done.

I would never have thought otherwise, but coming here was exactly what I needed. My mom and I had never spoken about anything so intimate in my entire life, but she put things into perspective for me. I believed Austin was the one; I could feel it in my gut, my heart – in every inch of me. I just had to make Amy see that as well.

I found Mom in the kitchen, pouring herself a glass of wine. When she saw me, she smiled and raised the glass.

"Isn't it too early for that?" I asked.

"It's five o'clock somewhere," she simply replied, taking a drink.

"Did someone stop by?"

"Oh, just Jessica; she and Hunter are back, and apparently, Austin lost his game."

She made a sad face.

I held back a gasp, feeling guilty for missing it. Austin was probably depressed right now. I wanted to comfort him – be there in his victories and defeats.

"I'm ordering an Uber," I said, reaching for my phone.

"Nonsense, honey, I'll drive you to the airport."

I gave her a skeptical stare, then pointed at the glass. "Are you sure about that?"

She grinned, pouring the entire contents of the glass down the drain. "I only took one sip… are you ready?"

"Yeah, just about."

I looked around to ensure I had everything with me. My gaze landed on a brochure on the counter. With the attractive cover, I picked it up and mouthed the words *'Sip n Paint'*.

"What's this?" I asked, scanning the first page.

"Oh, my Pilates instructor introduced me to it. It's this thing where you drink wine

and learn to paint."

I raised a brow. "I never knew you liked to paint."

"I'm mostly there for the free wine, but I find the painting to be therapeutic, too," she smiled. "I suck at it, though."

My mind drifted back to Austin and how good he was at it. I wanted to tell my mom how talented he was, but I held back. I didn't want her mentioning it to Jessica Callaghan because then Austin's secret would be out, and I didn't want to be the one to ruin his dream.

"The moderator owns an art gallery too. You should check it out when you come back. Anyway, we should get going; I don't want you getting back too late." She grabbed her car keys before running upstairs. "I'm gonna get a coat!"

"Okay!" I replied, slipping the brochure into my pocket.

I headed outside with my luggage in tow, pulling in a breath of fresh air. Heavy footsteps made me look to the right, and I stopped when I saw Hunter Callaghan crossing the street, heading toward me with his face as

sour as vinegar.

I gulped, tightening my fingers around the strap of my bag, conjuring a smile.

"Mr. Callaghan."

He stopped in front of me, giving me a quick once-over. "Lindsay, I'll be quick."

I stiffened at his tone. "Austin seems to have this crazy notion that football is no longer what he desires, and I know he made that decision with your influence."

I gasped and took a step back, realizing the Callaghans now knew about me and Austin's relationship and that I'd been made a villain by them, too.

I straightened my posture. "With all due respect, sir, Austin made that decision all by himself long before we got together."

He shifted in his spot. "Austin loses focus when he sets his sights on a pretty face. If you really care about him, then you'll convince him to keep playing."

"I won't do that, Mr. Callaghan. Football has never been Austin's dream. It has always been yours," I argued, watching as a muscle

ticked in his face.

He scoffed. “Listen to me, Lindsay; you either break up with Austin, or I cut your little boyfriend off forever,” he smirked. “With you out of the picture, I bet he’ll start to see reason soon enough.”

The blood drained from my face as I stood there, taking in the triumphant look on his face before he turned and left. Mom came out, and I gasped as soon as she touched me, the tears threatening to spill.

“Sweetie, is everything okay?” she asked, looking over to Mr. Callaghan, who was already at his doorstep.

I nodded, my gaze shifting to Mom. “Yeah, er, let’s go.”

**

The drive to the airport was mostly silent as I pondered what Hunter Callaghan said to me. After my mom’s advice, I had a plan, but my conversation with Austin’s dad brought me back to square one.

I believed him when he said he’d cut

Austin off, and I couldn't risk that. I couldn't be the reason Austin had nothing to his name. The tears threatened to spill, but I held them back, desperate not to arouse suspicion from my mom.

When we finally arrived at the departure terminal, she smiled and turned to me. "This is it, baby."

"Thanks, Mom, for everything," I said, pushing the car door open.

"Call me when you get there," she smiled. "I love you, honey."

"I love you too, Mom and some advice…" I said, watching as she perked up. "Get a divorce."

She gave me a surprised laugh in response, blowing me kisses as a sendoff. I got out and waved as I entered the huge building.

Time to face my ugly reality.

Chapter 20

Austin

Is she back yet? I texted Amy.

Not yet.

I released a heavy sigh and flopped down on the sofa as I glanced at the time. It was almost seven; what was taking her so long? I couldn't wait to tell Lindsay that because of her, I'd stood up to my dad for the first time in my life. Because of her, the weight of Dad's expectations had been lifted off my shoulders, which made me realize how in love with her I was.

Dad might have believed I only needed cooling down – that I wasn't serious – but I was, even with his threats. I wanted to explore the world with Lindsay by my side, and nothing would stop that.

She just came in. Hold your horses. Maybe you could talk to her tomorrow, Amy texted.

I rubbed the back of my neck and replied with a hesitant, *Okay*.

My night was a restless one, filled with anticipation for the next morning. I had no idea what the outcome would be, but I would fight like hell to convince Lindsay we would be great together. Amy had been the only stumbling block between us, but now that she was on board with our relationship, there was nothing standing in our way.

I rose at the crack of dawn, willing the day to be over soon enough, but it was like an extra hour got added each time it drew closer to the time I'd see Lindsay. Luckily for me, Coach had given us the day off from practice. When I knew Lindsay's classes were done for the day, I made my way to her.

As I walked down the hallway to her dorm room, I spotted Amy coming toward me, her face tight with tension.

My stomach dropped as I stopped in front of her. "Don't tell me you guys had another fight. Please."

"No, we're fine. Just… talk to her." She smiled tightly, patting my shoulder before

heading in the opposite direction.

With a prayer on my lips, I knocked on the door, then did a quick scan of my denim shorts and snug black T-shirt. I sniffed my arms a little and popped back my head quickly when the door opened. The breath hitched in my throat when I saw Lindsay standing on the other side, stunning as ever, with her blonde hair bound in a messy top bun, a few loose tendrils falling around her face.

Her eyes widened when she saw me standing there. She hugged her shoulders, drawing my attention to the tank top and cotton shorts that left her creamy skin exposed.

"Hi."

"Hey, Austin. What are you doing here?" she asked, her voice a little husky.

"Can we talk?"

She hesitated, her hand on the door. For a second, I thought she'd say no, but then she opened the door wider and stood aside, waiting for me to enter. This was my first time being inside their room, which made me notice how she and Amy differed in style.

She decorated her side with subtle earth tones that complemented every individual piece. Meanwhile, Amy's side contained a chaotic burst of colors, making it hard to concentrate on one thing.

The soft click of the door pulled me from my thoughts and brought my attention back to Lindsay. She stood before me, overwhelming my senses with her, sweet, warm scent.

"What's up?" she asked, so casually it made me frown.

"Is that a trick question?" I asked. "You haven't been answering my calls, Lindsay. I was worried sick until I heard you'd gone to visit your parents."

"Sorry about that. I needed some time to clear my head," she replied.

I slowly nodded. "And did you?"

She swallowed, bringing my attention to her slender neck that I'd laced with kisses countless times.

"I did."

"And? What did you decide?" I prodded.

She moved to her bed and took a seat on the edge, uncertainty bathing her face. “Austin…”

It wasn’t a good sign when she said my name like that. I raced to say something else before she shot me down.

“Amy and I spoke over the weekend. We’ve cleared things up,” I blurted.

“She told me. We talked long and hard last night, and I’m happy she’s no longer mad, but… I don’t think you and I will work.”

I moved toward her, not opposed to falling on my knees. “Lindsay, don’t do this, please.”

Her eyes glistened with tears. “I’m sorry.”

“You know we’re good together. Amy was the only reason standing between us, and now that she’s okay with it, I don’t see the problem,” I argued.

She didn’t say a word, just sat there as her face reddened and more tears pooled in her eyes.

“Is this because of your parents?” She

looked at me then, her eyes a sea of blue. “Lindsay, we’re not them – we won’t be. I love you.”

“I just can’t be with you,” she said, her voice shaky as she got up from the bed.

“Why not?” My frustration grew.

No response.

“I thought Amy was the issue, but apparently, she wasn’t. You got what you wanted from me, now you’re ready to move on. Did you even mean it when you said you loved me?” I asked, a painful lump forming in my throat.

Tears streamed down Lindsay’s face, but she said nothing, which made me wonder if I’d hit the nail on the head. She lied, didn’t she? The tables had turned. I was no longer the heartbreaker but the schmuck who’d been taken for a ride by the last person I expected to do me wrong. Taken aback by disbelief, I blinked away the stinging in my eyes and stormed towards the door.

“Austin, wait!” Her quivering voice called after me, and I paused abruptly, slowly turning to face her.

“I do love you,” she cried.

I rushed to her, gripping her shoulders. “Then what’s the issue, Lindsay, tell me,” I begged.

Her lips trembled. “Your dad,” she muttered, and my eyes widened. “He said if I didn’t break up with you, he’d cut you off.”

My jaw clenched as anger raged through me at my father’s audacity. But I didn’t care for him at the moment – not with Lindsay here with me.

I shook my head. “He threatened to cut me off if I gave up football, but I told him I didn’t care.”

Her forehead wrinkled. “You did what?”

“I don’t care if he cuts me off, Lindsay. Heck, I don’t care if he disowns me. Once I have you, I know everything will be okay.”

She sniffed. “But how will you survive?”

“My tuition had already been settled for the year. In a few months, I’ll be old enough to get my grandfather’s inheritance, which will have me set for a long time,” I assured her, using my thumb to brush away her tears.

"But…"

"There are no buts; I love you Lindsay, and that's all that matters to me right now…"

She smiled and nodded. "I love you too."

With that, I kissed her long and hard, feeling like a man who had been deprived his entire life. With Lindsay, I felt whole, confident that when the storms came, I had nothing to worry about. She was *home*. I'd found my place with her.

Just as my cock hardened against her, she pulled away and smiled. "Wait, I have something to show you." She retrieved her bag on the floor and pulled out a paper, handing it to me.

"Sip n paint?" I asked, confused. "What is this?"

"It's an art class my mom attends once a week. The moderator owns an art gallery, and I did some research — turns out there's one here as well." She grinned. "I figured maybe you could go, check it out – show him a few of your pieces."

I flipped over the paper and scanned the back. “This definitely sounds interesting. I’ll check it out. Will you come with me?”

“You don’t need to ask twice, Austin Callaghan,” she said sweetly, her body brushing against mine. “Of course, I’ll go with you.”

I kissed her again, but this time, it didn’t stop there.

Epilogue

Lindsay

5 years later

“I can’t believe we’re here.” I smiled at Austin, my arms looped around his neck as we waded through the warm Caribbean sea.

“Better than we imagined, right?” Austin asked, kissing me lightly on the lips.

“So much better. This is the best summer yet,” I replied as my gaze shifted to the shore. “Me and Amy always talked about it, but I never believed it would happen this soon, I guess.”

“Well, I promised to give you everything you wanted and more, didn’t I?” Austin raised a brow, and I blushed at the memory. “That was the vow I made to you on our wedding day.”

My heart fluttered at the mention of our

wedding day, the best day of my life. Austin proposed to me the night of graduation, and one year later, we sealed the deal. My life had been golden ever since. No complaints. Hands down, I was the happiest woman alive.

"You did, and I love you so much for that," I whispered, unable to resist his incoming kiss.

"Hey, guys! Your phones!" a voice called, causing us to pull apart. We looked to the shore, where Amy stood, waving at us with her shades on and our cellphones in her hands.

We waded from the water, and I took mine, a smile on my face when I realized it was my mom. I glanced at Austin as he got his and walked farther away on the shore.

"Hey, Mom," I said, taking a seat on one of the lounge chairs. My gaze shifted to Amy and Jason curled up on a chair together, giggling.

"Hey, sweetie, how is your trip?" Mom asked.

"It's the best; I truly couldn't ask for more," I replied.

“I’m happy to hear that; you deserve it, honey.”

“Thanks, Mom. How’s the condo hunting going?” I asked.

“Oh, it’s good, I guess. There are just so many options,” she moaned. “But I wanted something close to you, so I’ll just settle on something in that bracket.”

“Okay, did you see Dad?”

“Yeah, he’s still pissed about our divorce for some reason, but he did promise a few connections to start up our consulting business.”

I smiled. “That’s great!”

“I’m so excited – you and me side by side like the boss ladies we are,” she laughed.

I grinned. “I can’t wait.”

“Likewise, honey…You should talk to your Dad when you get back from your trip,” she said.

A soft groan left my mouth. Dad and I weren’t on speaking terms after I gave him a piece of my mind when Mom filed for divorce. Now, I no longer harbored any anger, just

wanted everyone to get along. “I will, definitely.”

“Okay, sweetheart, I don’t want to keep you. Enjoy your trip, and tell Austin and the others hi for me.”

“I will, Mom. I love you.”

“I love you too, honey. I’ll catch you later.”

I had a smile on my face as I ended the call and turned to find Austin walking toward me, a beautiful specimen of a man with his muscles on full display – carved to perfection. It was all mine – he was all mine, and I counted my blessings every day.

“Is everything okay?” he asked, wrapping his hands around me and pulling me close.

“Yeah, everything is fine; that was Mom. She said hi.”

“Did she finally find a condo?”

“Not yet, but she’s close to finding one.”

“Mmm…” He rocked with me; his head turned up to the sky. “So I just got off the phone with the art dealer from New York, and

I have an exhibition next week," he said with a smile.

My eyes widened. "OMG, babe, that's amazing!" I exclaimed as I hugged him, smiling hard in his embrace. I knew how much this meant for Austin because the transition into his career hadn't been the easiest. But he'd worked really hard, and it was now paying off.

"I know. All my dreams are coming true, and that's because I have you." He looked down on me. "All I need now is a mini you—or me," he placed his hand on my stomach, grinning.

"How about we start trying now?" I whispered in his ear.

His eyes widened before he looked toward Amy and Jason. "You think those two will notice if we slip away?" he asked, humor in his voice.

I glanced over at our friends who were busy making out. "Not a chance." I giggled. "Let's go." I pulled his hand and raced to our hotel room.

This wasn't the first time we'd left Amy and

Jason, but they never seemed to mind since they always enjoyed the privacy, too. We'd been on vacation for a few days now, and although we'd just decided to start trying for a baby, there was a high chance one was already growing inside me. We were always on each other every chance we got and that hadn't changed since college. I doubt it ever would.

Austin lifted me the instant we entered the hotel room, taking my lips for a kiss that left me breathless. I wrapped my legs around him as he made his way to the bedroom, where we spent the entire afternoon reaffirming our love for each other.

Night had already fallen when Austin finally rolled from my sweat-drenched body, his labored breathing matching mine. "You're amazing Mrs. Callaghan," he whispered, nuzzling my neck. "I can't believe I get to spend the rest of my life with you."

"Right back at you, Mr. Callaghan," I whispered back, happiness bubbling in my chest, excitement filling me at the thought of our future together.

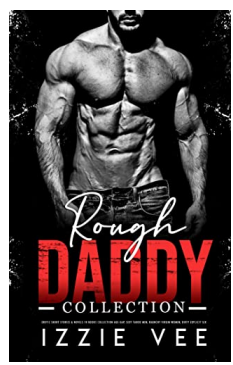
I couldn't wait for our next adventure.

KNOW ABOUT MY 10 BOOKS for 1 MEGA DEAL?

Only $2.99 or Free for KU & Prime Members for my 10 Books Collection

Each book is sold for $2.99 individually. A no-brainer deal. Grab yours.

10 BOOKS COLLECTION



CLICK HERE TO DOWNLOAD

AN EXTRA STEAMY 10 BOOKS BOX SET

Get the first 10 stories in this series in one quick download.

These stories are insta-love, fast paced standalones that can be read in any order. All are extremely steamy and have a HEA ending.

Some of the themes are age-gap/older man younger

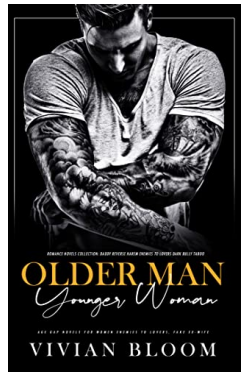
woman romance, enemies to lovers, bully romance, grumpy boss, huge mountain man and more ...

List of stories inside:

1. Daddy's Taboo Family-Friend.
2. Possessive Alpha-Daddy
3. Daddy's Bully-Heir
4. Off-Limits Coach Daddy
5. Daddy's Little Birthday Girl
6. My Roommate's Sexy Daddy
7. Huge Mountain Daddy
8. Grumpy Christmas Mountain Man
9. MC Daddy Possessive Biker
10. Big Brother's Quarterback Friend.?

Grab your copy HERE

Pssst … Do you enjoy reading full length novels? If yes, then I have some great '*insiders' info'* just for you, but keep this on the hush. This deal is only for readers who have at least read one of my books to the end, ok? Did you know you can have 8 full-length novels plus an extra steamy bonus story from me, for just **$2.99** or ***download it for free*** if you are a Kindle Unlimited or Prime Member? This amazing deal is ***over 2,100 pages***. Get this super deal below ^_^ …



CLICK HERE TO GET THE DEAL

A HOT, STEAMY COLLECTION OF AGE-GAP ROMANCE NOVELS.

List of novels inside are:

Heating Up the Kitchen - a reverse harem romance

Just Can't Behave - a forbidden, age-gap romance

Protection Details - a bodyguard, forbidden, age-gap romance

Getting Through the Seasons - a stepbrother's best friend, enemies to lovers

Getting Through the Seasons 2

Getting Through the Seasons 3

A Dose of Sunshine - a rockstar, enemies to lovers romance

Mr. Grumpy's Fake Ex-wife - a boss, stalker, enemies to lovers romance

A Bonus Novella - My Roommate's Daddy - an instalove, OTT, age-gap romance

All are standalones, contain no cheating and have happy-

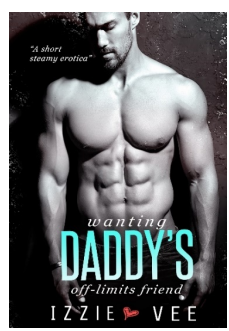
ever-after endings ♡
Don’t miss out on this fantastic offer, grab your copy today.

That's a completed 3 books series, 5 full length novels and a novella inside. **CLICK HERE** to download and enjoy!

Let’s connect.

Get this book for **FREE** when you sign up for our newsletter.

WICKEDLY STEAMY & FILTHY!



CLICK HERE TO GET FOR FREE

SAMPLE

I couldn't believe that I was about to head off to college and never had a sexual experience in my life. The person I considered my boyfriend in my senior years of high

school was initially the person I thought I would take the big step with but later found that he only had one intention in mind, and that was to fuck the only girl in our year who was rumored to still be a virgin – me. It had hurt, and I had broken off the relationship with a few heated words thrown at him but later realized there wasn't much I wanted out of the relationship either rather than sex.

I didn't want to be a virgin anymore, so I picked the boy that had given me the most attention and decided that he was the one. Unfortunately, he wasn't and here I was, about to head off to college with my hymen intact.

If it were only based on desire alone, then my dream guy would be the one who came over to my house every now and then with all his charm and kindness. He was the first crush I ever had, but I knew there was nothing I could make of the relationship considering he was my father's best friend.

Connor was everything I wanted in a man; he was sweet, kind, caring, incredibly handsome, and packing for his age. He taught gym at the college that I was accepted into,

which made my excitement all the more profound. Dad said that Connor would be there to look out for me as he had always done, and I … ***To continue reading get your FREE DOWNLOAD HERE*.**